Commentary
January 1998

# Giving It Away:
## An Open Letter to Bill Gates
*Chester E. Finn, Jr.*

## Forgotten Communism
*Alain Besançon*

## The Secret Life of Alfred Kinsey
*Joseph Epstein*

## The Brawl—A Story
*David Gelernter*

## Does Bill Evans Swing?
*Terry Teachout*

A DEBATE

## High-Tech: The Future Face of War?
*Alvin H. Bernstein & Martin Libicki*
*Frederick W. Kagan*

**Books in Review**
*James Q. Wilson on "America in Black and White"*
*Gabriel Schoenfeld • Algis Valiunas • Mark Falcoff • David Frum*

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# Commentary®

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# Letters from Readers

## Wealth & Welfare

To the Editor:

Given the importance and timeliness of the topic, it is hardly remarkable that the theme of the short and insightful article by Christopher C. DeMuth, "The New Wealth of Nations" [October 1997], was repeated at greater length in the *Economist* ("The World Economy," September 20, 1997). Nor is it surprising that both articles argue that the market system is in every respect far more efficient than a state-controlled economy.

Where the two differ, and quite significantly, is in whether it is the case, in Mr. DeMuth's words, that "our very wealth and equality are the undoing of the welfare state." Indeed, the Clintons' mammoth health-care plan was defeated, but after it Bill Clinton—the counterpart of leftist leaders in Britain, France, and (if knowledgeable journalists are correct in their predictions) soon in Germany—was reelected. More pointedly, the trend toward greater control by the state has continued, both in the United States and in other industrial countries.

The portion of America's gross domestic product absorbed by government spending rose from 3.9 percent in 1870 to 17 percent in 1920, to 27 percent in 1970, to 33.3 percent in 1990 and again in 1996. These figures are lower than in Britain, not to say Sweden, but they hardly suggest that the end of the welfare state is at hand in this country, or even very close. In all the countries that the *Economist* included in its worldwide survey, the portion of the gross domestic product that went to transfers and subsidies (that is, to the core of welfare) rose from just over 15 percent in 1960 to just over 22 percent in 1990.

The contrast between the two views suggests that market supporters may have won the abstract argument, but that those who favor a continuing or even growing welfare state are the victors in the political arena. The future is far less rosy than Mr. DeMuth would have us believe.

William Petersen
*Carmel, California*

Christopher C. DeMuth writes:

My essay was part description and part prophecy. The descriptive part argued that the welfare state was in serious financial trouble (no one doubts this), not because the people of the economically advanced nations are hard up and unequal but because they are very rich and very equal, much more so than when the policies in question were established. This argument is verifiable today: it is either a true or a false account of our present circumstances, regardless of where those circumstances may lead.

The prophetic part—certainly the more debatable part of the essay—argued that government programs of social insurance and economic regulation are going to be substantially "privatized" and reduced in size. Among the reasons I offered were (1) that issues of economic status and income distribution are losing their political resonance in wealthy middle-class societies, giving way to "amenity" and "cultural" issues, and (2) that in the area of social policy, government is losing its ability to perform two functions in concert, essential to maintaining political support for the programs in question: the provision of adequate social-welfare services, in terms of both quality and cost, and the redistribution of income among those who pay for and those who receive such services.

Mr. Petersen offers two straws in the wind for doubting that the welfare state is going to shrink (Clinton's reelection and the large share of U.S. eco-



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nomic product consumed by government); I offered several straws in the wind for thinking that it will. Conflicting examples are easy to come up with in arguments about where we are heading, but they are always inconclusive when standing alone. A swirl of competing tendencies exists on almost every matter at any given time, but the interesting question is which tendencies are likely to prevail. I remain convinced that the underlying economic and social developments I identified, although little recognized today, are powerful and durable and provide a truer portrait of our likely future than can be gotten from example-mongering of either the market-triumphalist or cultural-pessimist variety.

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## School Choice

TO THE EDITOR:

In "A Report Card on School Choice" [October 1997], Paul E. Peterson answers most of the arguments put forward by opponents of choice, but fails to address the crucial financial issue raised by critics like Education Secretary Richard Riley. This issue involves the children who are already enrolled in private schools, around five million nationwide, at an average tuition of $3,000, for a total of $15 billion. If there were a national voucher plan for private, not just public, schools, wouldn't it have to be made available to the parents of these children, too? If vouchers were allowed only for children currently in public schools, as some propose, one could argue, on the basis of the Constitution's equal-protection clause, that parents whose children currently attend private schools were being discriminated against. Or private-school parents could simply enroll their children in public schools, and then use vouchers to reenroll them in the same private school they had previously attended. Never underestimate what people will do for $3,000.

Where would the $15 billion in new money come from for such a nationwide plan? I have not yet heard a clearly reasoned answer to this question, but would like to hear one from Mr. Peterson. My own response is that (1) no one is proposing a national voucher scheme just yet, only partial city, or city-wide, or state-wide programs, and (2) vouchers could be means-tested. But even under both these approaches, many students now in parochial schools would be included in the plan.

This brings us back to the basic argument that it is not simply a matter of transferring existing money from public to private schools, which is what voucher proponents emphasize, but also of coming up with new money, which is going to be very hard with all the pressure for cutting spending and taxes. That is why I believe that tuition tax credits rather than vouchers will be the preferred vehicle in the school-choice debate.

CARL PEARLSTON
*Torrance, California*

TO THE EDITOR:

Paul E. Peterson's article on school choice is very enlightening. As a public- and private-school teacher since 1987, I can tell you that he is correct in saying that something has to change. The present system of public education is not working. But let me also say that the private schools I have taught in have been managed far less efficiently than even the public schools. Private schools survive, first, because their student/parent population is far superior to the student/parent population in the public schools, and, second, because they are not stuck with problem students as the public schools are. Private schools can expel such students.

Yes, public schools are a disaster. Private schools, however, while fulfilling the needs of the communities they serve, are no substitute. A partial choice system that adds an element of free enterprise to the education system would seem to be of benefit. We should, however, avoid the conclusion that if a little bit of a particular medicine is good, then a lot of it would be better.

I believe that the abolition of the public-education system that would result from the full-scale implementation of vouchers would be a nationwide tragedy that would make today's disgrace seem a pleasant problem.

ALAN S. FRANKEL
*Paramus, New Jersey*

TO THE EDITOR:

As Paul E. Peterson writes, "school choice is an experiment we cannot afford to pass up." But in truth it is an experiment that is well under way, and the results are that private and parochial schools do a better job at a lower cost because their purpose is not to provide jobs for teachers, custodians, and bureaucrats but to educate children.

A study of 126 public and eight religious schools by the Indiana Policy Review Foundation found that, holding other factors constant, parochial-school students perform better than public-school students. Despite spending less than half the amount per pupil that the public schools spend, and despite having larger class sizes, five of the eight religious schools in the study, all located in low-income neighborhoods, placed in the top thirteen schools in academic performance, with the other three in the top third.

Public schools in East Orange, New Jersey, a poor district, spend $7,000 per pupil, 18 percent more than the national average, compared with expenditures of $2,760 per pupil in East Orange Catholic schools. Yet these Catholic schools send 83 percent of their graduates to college, compared with 52 percent of the public-school graduates.

The newest evidence comes from University of Chicago economist Derek Neal, who compared the performance of public and Catholic high schools in urban areas. He found that a typical minority student who attends an urban public high school has only a 62-percent likelihood of graduating. The same student attending a Catholic school is 42-percent more likely to get a diploma. He also discovered that 91 percent of minority students in urban Catholic schools graduate, compared with 87 percent of white students in Catholic schools and 75 percent of white public-school students.

In his State of the Union address, President Clinton briefly embraced school choice as part of a commitment to teach every eight-



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year-old to read, admitting that 40 percent of them were currently functionally illiterate. But he limited his recommendation to choice among public schools, which is like telling consumers they can buy any car they want so long as it is an Edsel.

As Urban League President Hugh Price said at the League's annual convention:

> If urban schools as we know them continue to fail in the face of all we know about how to improve them, then [parents] will be obliged to shop elsewhere for quality education. We Urban Leaguers believe passionately in public education. But make no mistake. We love our children even more.

Amen.

DANIEL JOHN SOBIESKI
*Chicago, Illinois*

PAUL E. PETERSON writes:

Creating more effective learning opportunities, especially for children living in central cities, remains the most important objective of school reform. If this can be done, gains in productivity and reduced social expenditures will soon repay reasonable costs of reform.

In addition to these benefits, the introduction of school choice can be expected to reduce taxpayer costs, not increase them as Carl Pearlston maintains. To be sure, some families whose children are currently enrolled in private schools will take advantage of vouchers. But these additional costs, which at their very maximum would not constitute as much as 10 percent of today's publicly-financed costs, will be more than offset by savings realized from a more competitive system.

Today, private-school costs are somewhere between one-half and two-thirds those of public schools. Moreover, the Harvard economist Caroline Minter Hoxby has found that even public-school costs are reduced (without adversely affecting student performance) in metropolitan areas where there is competition among school districts. Thus, the magnitude of these savings is larger than the estimated costs of even a fully phased-in voucher program.

As for Alan S. Frankel's point that private schools can expel recalcitrant children, let me say that our study of Cleveland's scholarship program found that only 0.2 percent of low-income, inner-city parents reported that their child had been expelled from a private school during the program's first year. But because the potential for exclusion is present, private schools are able to spend less time and energy on enforcing rules and more on teaching and learning. To paraphrase Teddy Roosevelt, since private schools "carry a big stick," they can speak softly—usually a good way to teach.

Finally, I will let Daniel John Sobieski's letter speak for itself.

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### After Oslo

TO THE EDITOR:

In "A Strategy for Israel" [September 1997], Douglas J. Feith provides an insightful analysis of the Oslo process and demonstrates the imperative to repudiate it. For this he should be commended. And yet he has not gone nearly far enough, for he has confined himself to the utilitarian case while disregarding the moral one.

The first thing to note from a moral perspective is that aggression is wrong. The second, that rewarding aggression is doubly wrong, for it not only magnifies the impact of the initial act but justifies and encourages the aggressor while materially and morally undermining the victim. Consequently, rewarding aggression is not only morally wrong, it is also a very poor strategy for survival.

Yet added to Mr. Feith's convincing arguments for ending Oslo are his ancil-

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lary suggestions for the future—proposals that are strikingly similar to the strategies of the present Israeli government. He recommends continued efforts to bring about conditions for peace: maintaining faith with decent Palestinians, fostering democracy and economic prosperity, etc. Such suggestions do not follow from his analysis but stem from the need to accommodate what passes for morality and to advance the notion that the victim of aggression somehow has the obligation to help the aggressor.

ALLEN WEINGARTEN
*Morristown, New Jersey*

TO THE EDITOR:

Douglas J. Feith wants to return to the days before Oslo. This is not a strategy. Oslo was a way out of a dead-end situation that had no future. The handshake on the lawn between Yitzhak Rabin and Yasir Arafat was a commitment by the stronger of the two antagonists to search for a common path through the wilderness toward peace.

Never mind the secret intentions of the Arabs. Israel must be sincere. It must be tenacious. It must make a valiant effort. Rabin was a strategist with few illusions about Arab ambitions, but he knew that Israel needed to struggle honestly and mightily for a compromise peace. It must seek that path, because peace might be out there. And if it is not, then only because that path was sought will Israel have the right, in the world's eyes and its own, to take the hard, unilateral steps that will then become necessary.

This is how it has been from the beginning. Because Israel acceded to the paltry amount of land it was accorded in the 1947 partition, it earned the right to the ampler borders the 1948 war produced. Because in June 1967 Israel begged Jordan not to enter the battle, it was subsequently justified in limiting Jordan's ability to attack it again.

The Palestinians, too, must be given a fair chance. If they demonstrate a willingness and an ability to live uneventfully side by side with the Jewish state, good. If not, then much more than a return to pre-Oslo will be warranted.

MARC SALZBERGER
*Middle Village, New York*

TO THE EDITOR:

In his most interesting article, Douglas J. Feith agonizes, as so many of us do, over the problems associated with trying to make peace with the Palestinians and the Arab states. One aspect of this issue that is only gingerly touched upon by Mr. Feith is the psychological background of Palestinian and Arab attitudes toward Israelis and Jews.

Westerners, Jews and non-Jews alike, cannot, nor do they wish to, accept the difficult truth that it may take several generations of living under democratic rule before the Arabs can alter their thinking and give up their hatred of Jews.

No better or different solutions suggest themselves than the ones offered by Mr. Feith, but it is time to face up to the underlying hatred of Arab toward Jew and not ignore this issue in diplomatic and political negotiations.

HANS FISHER
*Highland Park, New Jersey*

DOUGLAS J. FEITH writes:

Allen Weingarten highlights the link between moral and practical considerations in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Israel's relinquishment of territory in compliance with the Oslo agreements can, alas, be seen as the fruit of the *intifada*: a reward given to the Arabs for years of rejectionism and violence against Israel. Rewarding such hostility is, I concur, morally offensive as well as strategically harmful.

In envisioning the possible humane evolution of Palestinian politics, I was not saying that "the victim of aggression somehow has the obligation to help the aggressor." If the Palestinians developed a more law-abiding, nonviolent leadership that was more respectful of human rights and more open to compromise than is the case today, not only would their own lives be improved, but possibilities for peace with Israel would be created that do not now exist. It is in Israel's self-interest to encourage this development, to the limited extent it can.

Marc Salzberger reminds us of the hope that Oslo would lead Israel and the Palestinians onto "a common path through the wilderness toward peace." The point of my article was not to deprecate the hope for peace, but to observe that Oslo had not succeeded, to examine why it had not, and to discuss the dangers of unrealistic expectations of peace.

"Never mind the secret intentions of the Arabs,"

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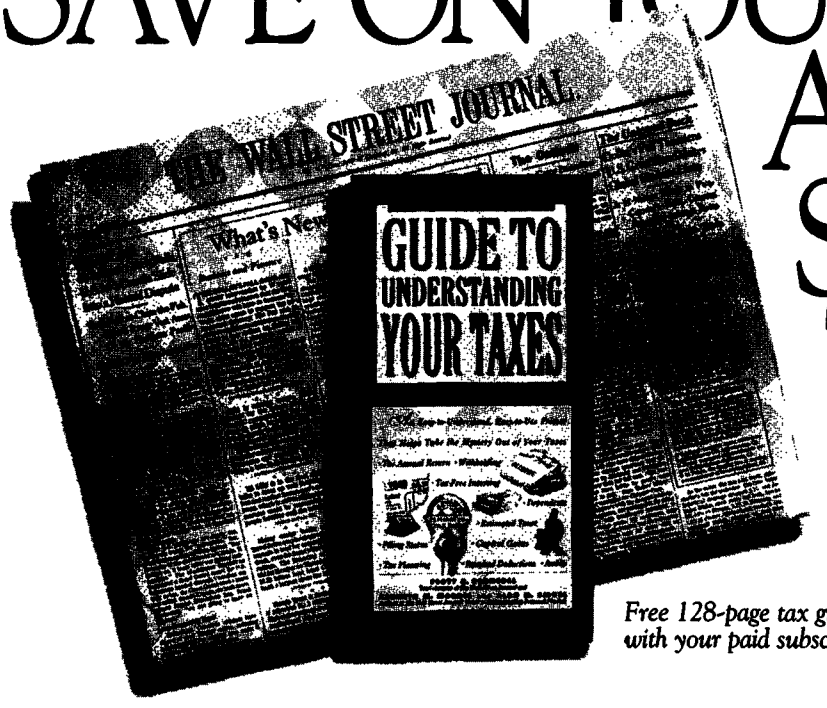


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Mr. Salzberger says, echoing the statement of Shimon Peres I quoted in my article. I believe those intentions are of the essence. Peace is what is in people's hearts and minds, not what is in documents that untrustworthy political leaders with dreadful criminal records might cynically endorse. In his letter, Hans Fisher makes a point similar to the one I make here, stressing that too little attention is paid in diplomatic analyses to the subjective attitudes of the Arabs.

If the intentions of Arab leaders toward Israel were to become benign, there could be peace. No Byzantine, legalistic, 400-page peace and arms-control arrangements *à la* Oslo II would be required. If, on the other hand, those intentions remain malign, I cannot see any agreement producing peace.

Morale in Israel generally improves when the Israeli government is seen to be pursuing peace actively. But Israeli officials harm that morale when they seek peace with the rhetoric of moral equivalence and with policies that reflect exhaustion, fear, and impatience.

---

## Civic Culture

TO THE EDITOR:

Grateful though I am for Christopher Caldwell's generally insightful review of my book, *Liberal Racism* [October 1997], I am nonplussed by his characterization of my discussion of civic culture as a "nostalgic" hedge against the conservative wisdom "that economic progress—of the kind promised by capitalism—is the most trustworthy route to the color-blind citizenship for which he longs."

I write that conservatives "have important lessons to teach the Left about markets, which sometimes stimulate civic virtue by throwing people together across old lines of racial enmity, confounding ancient superstitions and feuds," but that because market forces also "disrupt and erode traditional American networks of sharing and trust," conservatives who champion them indiscriminately are not "our best guides to rejuvenating civic culture now, even when they're right about the absurdities of liberal racism." Mr. Caldwell demonstrates this in admonishing me, "There is no going back to the small-town new England of [W.E.B.] Du Bois. . . . Civic cultures mature over generations; once you wipe one out, there is nothing to do but wait for another to grow."

Is it really that simple? Tell it to William J. Bennett or Bill McCartney of the Promise Keepers. The point of my chapter on Du Bois and New England was not to deny economic and political challenges but to ask "what we can do culturally to vindicate individuals . . . who want to affirm an American belonging that is not colored by others' racial prescriptions." That is not turning back the clock; I cite new examples of civic rejuvenation but write that

> our purpose here isn't to examine such models but to challenge the racial mindset that inhibits them. . . . The loss of a common narrative and consensual rites of passage is driving young people to cults, white militias, and ghetto gangs, and yearnings like theirs are running deep and gathering force.

Conservatives now acknowledge tensions between market freedom and civic health. Liberals may hasten cultural dissolution, but it is private investments in free markets that put Calvin Klein-*cum*-kiddie-porn ads on the sides of public buses—and nonmarket, civic forces that take them off. Moreover, the racial districting that the conservative Supreme Court majority has quite rightly invalidated was actively abetted by other conservatives in the Reagan and Bush administrations, while corporate capitalists support inane "diversity training"—so much so that Newt Gingrich & Co. abandoned the Dole-Canaday bill against racial preferences. This is not "the most trustworthy route to the color-blind citizenship" for which I long.

Conservatives who gloss over these problems limit their prospects, enabling me to write in *Liberal Racism* that "I speak for many other Americans who are uncomfortable around the ideologically . . . encamped." Why do you stubbornly resist being dragged along the path to acknowledging that *most of us loathe ideologically driven movements*? Shouldn't we? Shouldn't writers whose work is as insightful and nuanced as Christopher Caldwell's?

JIM SLEEPER
*New York City*

CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL writes:

If I do not hold out much hope for the current civil-society enthusiasm, it is because I *agree* with Jim Sleeper that "most of us loathe ideologically driven movements." What disappoints me is how little of the civil-society movement arises from civil society itself. At present, its impetus is being provided by politicians, from President Clinton to William J. Bennett, who recognize the mess government has made of local folkways but cannot think of an agency other than government to fix it. Local associations launched by big-government initiatives wind up being not civic associations but governmental ones.

Mr. Sleeper implies that I turn a blind eye to Reagan/Bush racial gerrymandering and "corporate capitalist" excesses like diversity training. I don't. I oppose both. As for the Promise Keepers, while I am impressed by the message of racial inclusion espoused by Bill McCartney, solving our race problem will be largely a matter of appealing to individual consciences, a task at which modern mass movements have a poor track record.

I do not claim the market has a great record of solving problems of conscience, either—except that in creating prosperity for a larger number of people it leaves us with less to fight about. And that is not nothing. *So in this matter*, at least, I advocate laissez-faire, even at the risk of sounding "ideologically encamped."

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## Religious Freedom

TO THE EDITOR:

In "The Worst Decision Since 'Dred Scott'?" [October 1997], his favorable analysis of the Supreme Court's ruling striking down



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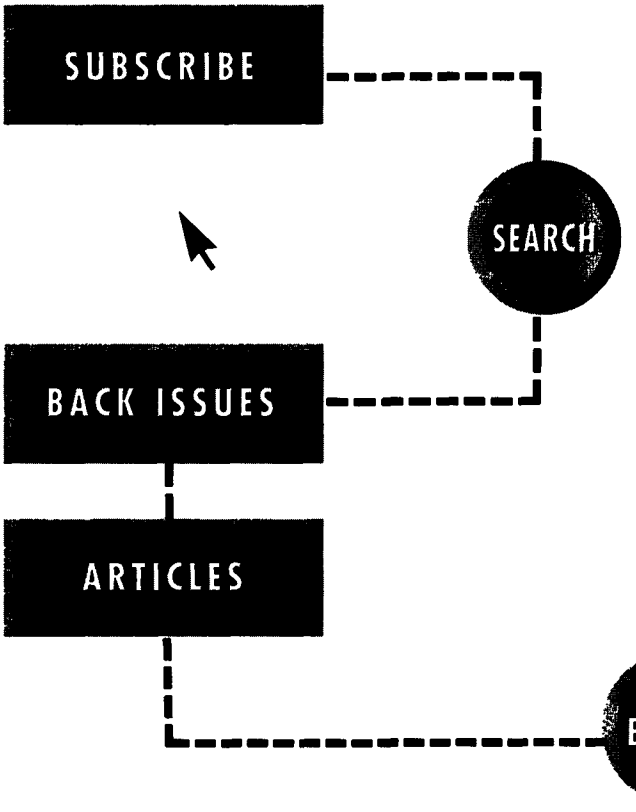


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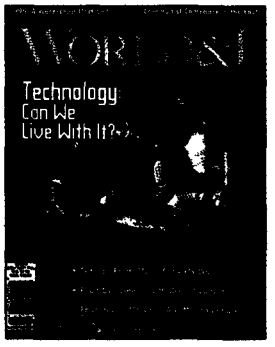


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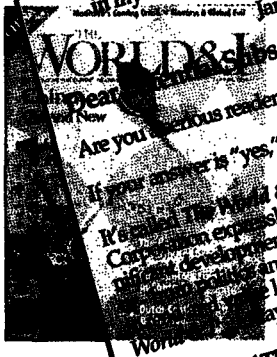

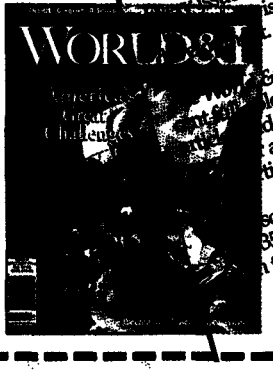

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the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), Wilfred M. McClay fails to deal persuasively with the fact that the First Amendment provides that the government "shall make no law . . . prohibiting the free exercise [of religion]" and that RFRA was developed and encouraged by a broad coalition of religious and civil-liberties groups in the wake of the Supreme Court's decision in *Smith* (1990), a decision that essentially read that clause out of the Constitution.

It has escaped the notice of the Justices as well as of analysts like Mr. McClay that the same week the Court struck down RFRA it also struck down the Communications Decency Act, by which Congress sought to regulate obscenity on the Internet. In doing so, the Court asserted that the First Amendment's requirement that the government "shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech" trumped all but the most narrowly tailored restrictions on the right of free speech.

It was the height of irony (and tragic absurdity) that the Court could read the same opening words to the First Amendment—"shall make no law"—so strictly with regard to the abridgment of free speech and so loosely with regard to the abridgment of the free exercise of religion in a matter of days. It is deeply troubling that the Court affords the highest protection to those who wish to purvey pornography on the Internet and minimal protection to those serving their God, when both these rights share the same constitutional language.

It is a reasonable and appropriate interpretation of the First Amendment that the government must demonstrate a compelling interest before it may even indirectly infringe the rights of individuals to worship or speak freely. RFRA would not have been necessary if the Court had not removed this protection from religious citizens in the first place.

NATHAN J. DIAMENT
*Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America*
*New York City*

WILFRED M. MCCLAY writes:

My article had relatively modest aims and addressed itself to a rather narrow question: whether the Supreme Court was outrageously wrong in striking down RFRA, as so many people of faith, including some of my own spiritual and intellectual heroes, seemed to be saying.

Nathan J. Diament is absolutely right in pointing out what a deeply troubling commentary it is on our times that the expressive liberties of pornographers and other sociopaths are shown such tender solicitude while the perspectives of religious believers are treated with relative indifference, if not outright hostility. Nor do I disagree that the *Smith* decision was alarmingly and unnecessarily sweeping, particularly given the fact that it was propounded by a Court tending to imperial overreach, or that some corrective legislative response was perhaps warranted.

But one has to look closely at the specific legislative response that was made and ask whether it did the job that needed doing, at a reasonable cost, without too many untoward side effects or unanticipated consequences. And that is where the problems begin to emerge.

Although I share Mr. Diament's sense of the general dangers we are now facing, including the dangers of judicial usurpation, I felt compelled to point out that RFRA itself was a deeply flawed measure, both for the reasons the Court gave—including the fact that it violated the constitutional separation of powers—and for other reasons as well. I concluded that we were probably better off without it.

One should not be taken in by the fact that RFRA initially garnered such universal support; this is actually less impressive than it

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seems. Congress has acquired a bad habit of passing huge and popular feel-good measures like the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Violence Against Women Act, the Gun-Free-School Zones Act, the Brady Bill, and so on, knowing that it will be someone else's problem to figure out what they mean, and what they will cost. Such bills invariably support worthy principles but nearly always turn out to be rolling calamities in practice, with particularly disastrous effects upon federalism. RFRA was of a piece with this trend, and its unanticipated consequences were already beginning to come into view.

We need to find better ways of protecting the religious freedom that Mr. Diament and I both cherish, and this will require a more serious and disciplined response from Congress.

---

## Getting Out

TO THE EDITOR:

Walter Laqueur evidently had apoplexy when he reviewed my book, *The Myth of Rescue* [October 1997], and, like most splenetic reviews, his is full of nonsense and distortion about what I have actually said, the better to rebut what is not there.

Mr. Laqueur claims that "Rubinstein repeats an old canard—namely, that the existence of Auschwitz was unknown in the West until the summer of 1944, [which] has been authoritatively refuted at least 100 *times*." Leaving aside the truth of Mr. Laqueur's claim about the knowledge of Auschwitz, which is more problematical than he thinks, I do no such thing. My point is entirely different, namely, that no one anywhere in the West proposed bombing Auschwitz, or the railway lines to Auschwitz, until May 1944, and when these ideas were first proposed, the response of the Jewish community was surprisingly lukewarm, if not overtly hostile: bombing Auschwitz or the railway lines to Auschwitz was not seen by anyone as a panacea. Indeed, so far as I am aware, these proposals were not mentioned by any postwar historian or commentator on the Holocaust as a lost opportunity until the 1970's, when they emerged, literally out of nowhere, chiefly through the writings of David Wyman, as the best-known example of the Allies' failure to do more. Prior to May or June 1944, absolutely no one proposed bombing Auschwitz.

Shortly after its founding in January 1944, the U.S. War Refugee Board asked every important American Jewish and pro-refugee organization to propose measures for rescuing Europe's Jews. By March 1944, it had received over 120 such suggestions (nearly all of them entirely useless), not one of which proposed bombing Auschwitz or the railway lines to Auschwitz.

A month after the bombing was first suggested, on June 11, 1944, the Executive of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem, headed by David Ben-Gurion, debated whether the Allies should be approached to "bomb the death camps in Poland, such as Auschwitz, Treblinka, etc." Of the twelve members of the Executive present at the debate only one, Yitzhak Gruenbaum, supported this proposal. Eleven, however, including Ben-Gurion, concurred with the view of Dr. Emil Schmorek that "we cannot take upon ourselves the responsibility of a bombing that would cause the death of a single Jew."

Mr. Laqueur also claims that my figures for Jewish emigration from Nazi Germany are wrong and that the "the real figures can be found in Saul Friedländer's *Nazi Germany and the Jews*." My statistics come from Herbert A. Strauss's comprehensive study of this question, originally published in the 1980-81 *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*. So far as I am aware, Friedländer presents only one relevant statistic in his book: on p. 317, he states that 190,000 Jews remained in the Old Reich (pre-1933 Germany) at the end of 1939. This is virtually identical to Strauss's figure of 185,100 Jews remaining in the same territories in September 1939. Both Strauss and I carefully note that some German Jews emigrated to places like France and the Netherlands, from which many were subsequently deported to their deaths. But a German Jew fleeing to France in 1938 could no more have known that Hitler would defeat and occupy France in the summer of 1940, install a fascist government there, and initiate a policy of imprisoning Jews within Europe (the reverse of the Nazi policy of expelling Jews from Germany) prior to deporting them to death camps in Poland than a Jew emigrating to Britain could have known that Britain would not be invaded and thus that he would survive.

Nowhere do I assert, as Mr. Laqueur mendaciously claims, that "everyone who wanted to find a haven could." Obviously there were high barriers to free emigration, as there have been everywhere in the world since the 1920's. The point is, first, that no one foresaw the fate of those who remained behind in Nazi-occupied Europe, and, secondly, the pace of emigration of Jews from Nazi Germany (other Jews in Europe were, of course, not under Nazi occupation and not refugees prior to the outbreak of the war) was manifestly quickening in the last two years prior to September 1939, so that while 23,000 Jews emigrated from the pre-1933 boundaries of Germany in 1937, 40,000 did so in 1938, and 78,000 in 1939. After 1939, significant further emigration was blocked by the outbreak of the war and a fundamental change in Nazi policy to one of imprisoning Europe's Jews prior to genocide rather than expelling them.

WILLIAM D. RUBINSTEIN
*University of Wales*
*Aberystwyth, UK*

TO THE EDITOR:

I had always assumed that the attempt to impute culpability for the tragedies of the Holocaust to Western leaders was a particularly vile canard of Communist agitprop. Perhaps someone at COMMENTARY could have reminded Walter Laqueur that there was a war going on, and going badly, with the outcome highly uncertain and information flows befogged by despair and hysteria.

Allied bombers were suffering more than 50 percent losses at the time (those lost included both my father and my godfather, Walter Rosen). The most vital military targets of the enemy proved



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difficult to find and treacherous to destroy and were repaired with astonishing speed. The key Romanian oil fields resisted constant attacks until mid-1944; railway targets were restored in hours.

The idea that some slyly unexpressed but apparently egregious Allied anti-Semitism prevented a magically surgical action to balk the prime Hitlerian war aim is unworthy of a "distinguished historian." Surely COMMENTARY is above the current masochistic American itch to blame the virtuous for the persistence of evil and tragedy in the world.

GEORGE GILDER
*Tyringham, Massachusetts*

TO THE EDITOR:

I was pleased to read Walter Laqueur's review of *The Myth of Rescue*. Mr. Laqueur is familiar with the relevant material and was able to bring a critical eye to Rubinstein's book. If there is anything I would take issue with in the review, however, it is Mr. Laqueur's concession to Rubinstein on the question of the bombing of Auschwitz. In claiming that operational difficulties made it impossible for the Allies to bomb Auschwitz, Mr. Laqueur says Rubinstein may have a point, though he immediately adds that the point does not go "very far at all." But even this qualified concession, as I show in my article, "Could the Allies Have Bombed Auschwitz-Birkenau?" (*Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Fall 1997), is unnecessary.

I cannot go into all the evidence I cite in my article, so I will limit myself here to a few examples. To begin with, and as Mr. Laqueur also notes, Rubinstein seems to have done no archival research for his book, and on this subject he has relied almost exclusively and uncritically on an article by James Kitchens III in the *Journal of Military History* ("The Bombing of Auschwitz Reexamined," April 1994). But this article is flawed both in its understanding of military operations in general and in respect to a mission against Birkenau, where the death camp at Auschwitz was located, in particular.

Kitchens claims that Birkenau was a "well-nigh invulnerable target," defended by German radar and 79 heavy anti-aircraft (AA) guns. While it is true that the Germans used radar to track Allied bomber formations, a review of mission reports from this period reveals that Allied raids to Upper Silesia, where Auschwitz is situated, encountered minimal Luftwaffe resistance. Allied crews reported that the few enemy aircraft that did appear were flown by inexperienced and unaggressive pilots. One intelligence report even surmised that the negligible fighter resistance may have been due to German fuel shortages. Whatever the reason, the hard-pressed German air force was not seriously defending the area.

In addition, the 79 German AA guns were placed so as to defend the I.G. Farben plant. But this so-called "impenetrable shield" was


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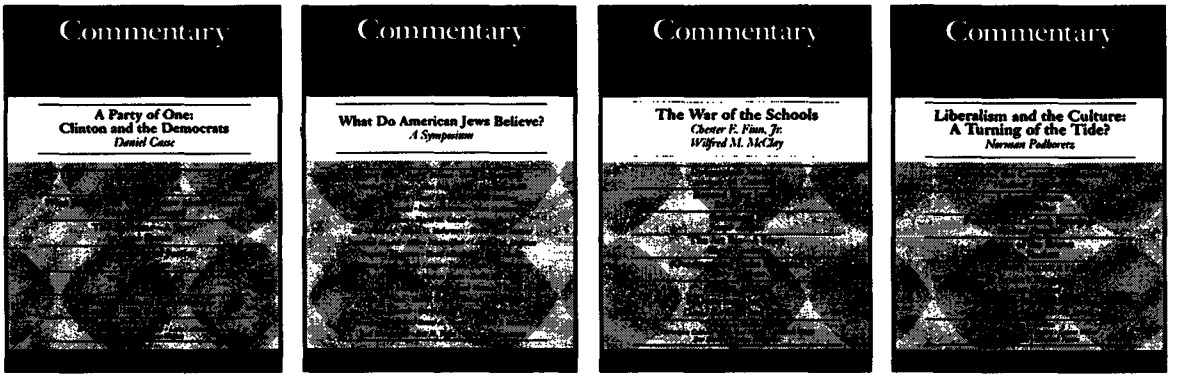


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able to bring down only one plane out of 127 bombers attacking the plant on August 20, 1944. This was a loss rate far below the average for the Fifteenth Air Force, which carried out the raid. Moreover, since Birkenau was located approximately five miles away from the Farben factory, bombers attacking the death camp would have been out of range of many of the German guns.

Thus, as I demonstrate at greater length in my article, Birkenau could have been effectively attacked with minimum collateral damage had there been the will to do so. This is also the opinion of Leonard Cheshire, one of the most decorated British pilots of World War II, who was awarded Britain's highest military decoration, the Victoria Cross.

Ironically, just prior to the rejection by the Allies of Shmuel Zygielbojm's request to attack the rail lines to Auschwitz, in the spring of 1943, SS Chief Himmler, fearing an attack on Birkenau, ordered the installation of escape-prevention measures. If Himmler was concerned about an Allied air raid, he need not have worried.

STUART G. ERDHEIM
*New York City*

TO THE EDITOR:

I am puzzled by the fact that, as Walter Laqueur notes in his review, William D. Rubinstein's *The Myth of Rescue* has been praised by such figures as Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. I cannot believe that anyone other than persons who purposely aim to distort the truth would praise this book.

I thought it was by now well-known that affidavits of support were required of persons who wanted to emigrate to the U.S. With few exceptions, death awaited those who had no relatives here, who could not get past the State Department's infamous use of the "public-charge provisions" of the immigration law, or who registered to emigrate after the quota for their country had been filled.

It is a cruel lie to claim that more Jews could not have been saved. If Mr. Rubinstein is interested, I can supply him with the names of my grandfather, my aunt, family friends, and others who desperately tried to leave Germany—they were all slaughtered.

ELLEN BLUMENTHAL SEHGAL
*Chevy Chase, Maryland*

WALTER LAQUEUR writes:

William D. Rubinstein has written a book that another reviewer, in the *Times Literary Supplement*, called "absurd and pernicious." I certainly share these sentiments and have no wish to enter into a debate with the author now.

As for George Gilder, I wish he had read my review with a little more attention. First, it is a complete distortion of what I wrote to say that I hold "slyly unexpressed . . . egregious Allied anti-Semitism" responsible for the inaction of the Western powers. Second, of course I am aware that the war was not going well for the Allies in 1941-42, but the years in question are 1943 and especially 1944, and no one I know has said the war was going against the Allies then. On the feasibility of bombing Auschwitz-Birkenau, I refer Mr. Gilder to Stuart G. Erdheim's letter.

Finally, we have the personal testimony of Ellen Blumenthal Sehgal, whose experience, sadly, was only all too common.

---

## "Contact"

TO THE EDITOR:

Special plaudits to Daniel J. Silver for his excellent discussion of the movie *Contact* ["God and Carl Sagan in Hollywood," September 1997]. I had become so numbed from hearing people praise the movie and say it treated religion fairly that I was pleased to find my own critical view vindicated by Mr. Silver. My compliments—well done!

JOHN D. SHEPARD
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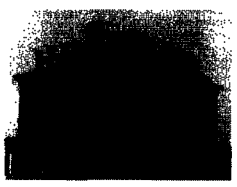

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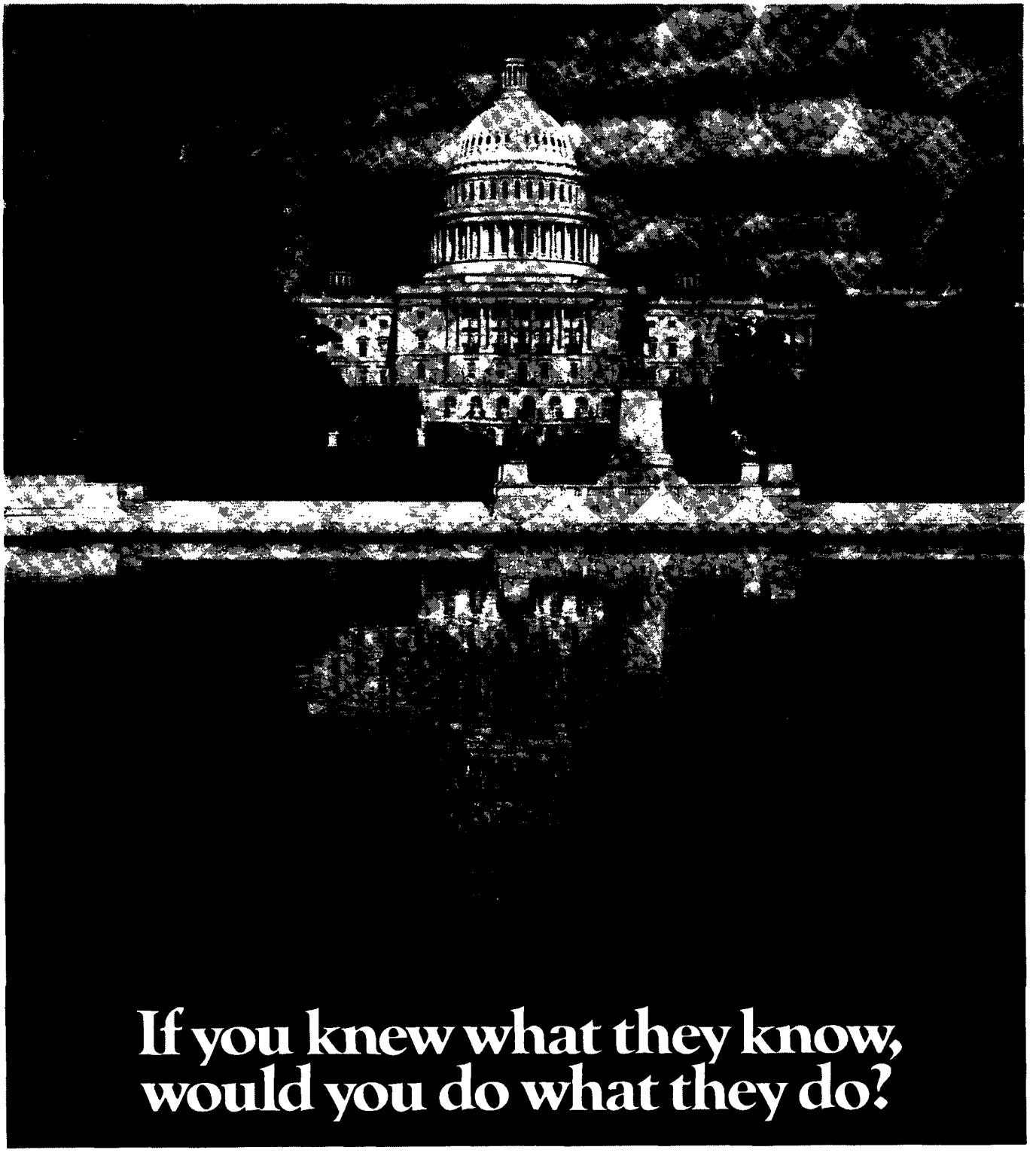

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Commentary
January 1998

# Giving It Away:
## An Open Letter to Bill Gates

*Chester E. Finn, Jr.*

DEAR MR. GATES,

Many people, myself among them, are interested in what you will do with the $40 billion or so you have accumulated. You have said that you intend to give away 95 percent of your fortune, but that you are waiting until your fifties before seriously embarking on the project. With your forty-second birthday recently passed, that means you have nearly a decade to continue building your company and your net worth and preparing for a task that promises to be more difficult than earning the billions in the first place.

I say more difficult because I am assuming, from your relatively modest philanthropic efforts thus far, that you want truly to do good and not merely to be thanked by some and noticed by many. On that assumption, and as one who has given considerable thought to the history and the current condition of American philanthropy, and who has lately come to administer a relatively small educational foundation, I want to offer some advice.

VAST SUMS are being given away in the United States today, the greater part by individuals with fortunes large or small or even with no fortunes at all. In 1996, for example, individuals at every level gave a whopping $120 billion to charity, as opposed to the $8.5 billion given by American corporations. Institutionally speaking, however, the biggest and by far the most influential philanthropic sector is made up of foundations. The country boasts a staggering 40,000 foundations, whose combined assets run to around $225 billion and whose annual gifts total approximately $12 billion.

If you were to enter this arena aggressively, you could easily place yourself at the top of the heap in any ranking of philanthropic firepower. For better or for worse, you could make a real difference. That is why I mean to begin by offering you a cautionary tale or three.

Let me put the case starkly. For the past several decades, "big philanthropy" in this country has had little if anything to do with good works as that term is generally understood, and still less to do with buttressing the institutions and values of a free society. Instead, much philanthropic activity, especially on the part of foundations, is engaged in subverting those institutions and values.

Perhaps the most familiar example is that of the Ford Foundation. The story begins in the 1950's with the Grey Areas program, described by one recent student of philanthropy, Heather Mac Donald, as a "turning point in foundation history" ("The Billions of Dollars That Made Things Worse," *City Journal*, Autumn 1996). The central

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premise of this program was that the ordinary municipal agencies, charities, and political processes of American cities could not be trusted to do right by poor people. Rather, the whole "establishment" needed a radical shaking-up.

As Mac Donald shows, however, the means chosen for this shaking-up, epitomized in the slogan "community control," led to disastrous results, not only locally but nationally, when it was adopted as the favored strategy of the federal War on Poverty. But the Ford Foundation was undeterred by experience. It spent the decades of the 60's and 70's sponsoring the calamitous decentralization of New York City's public schools, subsidizing organizations that purported to speak for "victim" groups of every imaginable stripe, and replacing what had been a distinguished record of support for the fine arts with color- and gender-coded aid for "artists" whose credentials were measured by the stridency of their "attitude."

When Henry Ford II resigned in 1977 from the board of the huge foundation that bears his family's name, not only did he publicly rebuke its leaders, staff, and grantees, but he privately called the institution a madhouse. Today, what that madhouse has wrought extends well beyond Ford's own palace in midtown Manhattan. For the Ford Foundation, as former Secretary of State Dean Rusk once remarked, is the "fat boy in the canoe," and what it does "makes a difference to everybody else." Foundations that have followed its lead include giants like Carnegie, Rockefeller, Mott, and Mellon, and many smaller and less famous ones.

The litany of effects is well known, and includes almost every aspect of the assault on authority that we associate with the 60's and 70's. Racial preferences, radical feminism, "peace studies," crusades for prisoners' (but not victims') rights, sundry efforts to reshape American foreign and defense policies in general and, in particular, to support friendship with the Soviet Union, Castro, or the Sandinistas or to advance the cause of the PLO and the IRA—all these initiatives and more were funded at least in part, and in some cases were conceived, by American foundations.

BY THE 1980's, it was clear that these efforts had succeeded, if not in changing the mind of the American electorate then in decisively affecting the outlook and the discourse of American elites. And so, as yesterday's student radicals grayed into today's tenured (but still radical) professors and policy wonks, the charitable landscape evolved as well. Thanks precisely to the earlier successes, it became possible to continue the anti-establishment project of the 1960's and 70's by other and even more effective means: *by funding the establishment itself.*

Universities and cultural institutions were the most obvious candidates for the new largesse, as were the mainline churches and media like National Public Radio. But so, it turned out, was government. Progressing from their earlier role as testing sites for favored public policies, foundations now became virtually one with federal and state agencies. They began to design "collaborative" programs that blended private and public dollars, smudging the bright line between the proper realm of government and the distinctive domain of charity.

Foundations today even *look* like government. Although staffers eat better lunches than do government employees, and are more apt to work in New York or Los Angeles (or Cleveland or Kansas City) than in Washington or Sacramento, the philanthropic world has developed a virtual civil service of "professional" employees who move from one foundation to the next while scaling the career ladder. Like federal bureaucracies, foundations are regularly lobbied by their "constituents," employ lots of consultants, and are caught in the hammerlock of political correctness. And like government, they have become smug, self-referential, and ossified.

As for the policies they embrace, and the programs they fund, these, with honorable exceptions, still remain conceptual throwbacks to the 1960's, though the hard political edge of that period has partly yielded to a subtler attack on the morals, social standards, and traditional culture of Americans. Consider, if you will, this sampling of recent grants by the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations:

- $5,000 for "a documentary about women's sexual awareness and self-esteem";
- $15,000 for the creation and production of "a new collaborative theater piece entitled *Old, Jewish, and Queer*";
- $25,000 for a catalogue of the show, *Prison Sentences: The Prison as Site/The Prison as Subject*;
- $35,000 for an "interactive installation based on an Iroquois prayer";
- $35,000 for "a one-year installation on the World Wide Web that will provide an ongoing discussion of gender, sexuality, and the justice system";
- $35,000 for "an interactive, multimedia CD-ROM and related Web site about the Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas, Mexico";



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• $45,000 to "bring together local community organizations and performing-arts groups to address the issue of environmental racism";
• $50,000 to the University of California at Davis to "enable feminists from abroad to participate in a residency program at the university's Gender and Global Issues Group";
• $86,500 to a New York center to "evaluate community-based programs to counter homophobia among youth'";
• $250,000 to support resident fellowships in the humanities at the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies of the City University of New York.

To be sure, not all foundations are subsidizing as much folly as Ford and Rockefeller, but the grants listed above are typical. If you were rash enough to attend one of the massive conclaves of the Council on Foundations, the industry's dominant organization, or any of the smaller conferences of the "affinity groups" allied with it, you might think you had fallen through the looking glass. In Honolulu last May, for example, at the Council's 48th annual meeting, you might have participated in sessions on "racial identity, racial politics, and philanthropy" or on the "new paradigm" of "disability culture." You could have joined the "working group on funding gay and lesbian issues." Or, if hungry, you might have dropped by for "multicultural snacks" at a "site session" devoted to the question, "Is the Statue of Liberty Merely a Myth?"

WHAT I have said so far might lead you to the reasonable conclusion that, in establishing a foundation, the trick is to be clear about what *you* want to accomplish, rather than leaving it to "professionals" to decide. Indeed, many is the philanthropist who has failed to master that simple trick. No one who knew the late John and Catherine MacArthur, for example, could doubt that they would have been appalled by the use of their insurance and real-estate fortune to lavish grants on left-leaning intellectuals, performance artists, and race-and-gender specialists. The MacArthurs simply failed to provide guidance, and they were not around to make mid-course corrections.

Plenty of philanthropists, however, know exactly what they want to do, and, through a foundation or on their own, go about doing it in their own lifetimes. The problem is that their ideas are merely imitative of what the "professionals" are already doing, if not still worse. Thus, we must suppose that Ted Turner and Jane Fonda are hardly ignorant of the politics of the United Nations, or the wasteful and often harmful projects undertaken by its constituent agencies—projects now to be enlarged thanks to Turner's absurd but indisputably high-profile billion-dollar gift. We must also believe that the secretive Charles Feeney, wealthy from his ownership of the world's duty-free stores, knew what he was doing when he wove a web of offshore corporations and foundations to shield his sizable gifts to, among other "charities," Sinn Fein and its military wing, the IRA. Perhaps he did not intend his money to buy the bombs that would be planted in London subways, but when you arm militant nationalists, that is one predictable result.

Walter Annenberg is a different story. Of this builder of *TV Guide*, great friend of Ronald Reagan, and former ambassador to the Court of St. James's, whose foundation ranks twelfth in size in the country, perhaps the kindest thing to say is that he has allowed his affection for public education to blind him to its realities. Annenberg has given hundreds of millions to urban and rural school systems and sundry intermediary organizations, most of which are either part of the petrified education establishment or vendors of pedagogical snake oil. Advised by such eminences as Vartan Gregorian, president formerly of Brown and now of the principal Carnegie foundation—this really is an incestuous world—Annenberg was surely aiming in all sincerity to make American education better. In sad fact, for all the improvement his generosity has wrought, he might as well have joined Ted Turner and poured his dollars into the sea.

Today's biggest wheel among do-it-yourself philanthropists is the buccaneer investor and currency trader George Soros, now giving away several hundred million a year in the U.S. and abroad. A refugee from both the Holocaust and Stalinism, Soros has an abiding hatred of authoritarian regimes. But his fondness for the "open society," a term he invokes in homage to his intellectual mentor, the philosopher Karl Popper, who coined it, has taken some strange turns and brought him some dubious companions and grantees.

On the board of the Open Society Institute, Soros's American foundation, sits Lani Guinier, proponent of the idea that only blacks can represent other blacks "authentically" and an early, ill-starred nominee as an assistant attorney general for civil rights in the Clinton administration. The institute is best known for funding efforts to decriminalize various drugs and to develop "alternatives to law enforcement" for addicts and dealers. Abroad, along with acts of genuine charity—to Bosnians in need of water, Gypsy children in need of kindergartens, homeless Hungarians in need of mat-



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tresses—Soros has become a major political activist pushing causes of the Left. His aim, he says, is to help rebuild civil society; if so, one wonders why his foundation is so preoccupied with "the integration of cultural, ethnic, gender, age, and other diversities" in these countries and intent on overcoming "deep cultural prejudices against people with different sexual orientation." Surely civil society in the former Communist world has troubles enough of its own without being dragged into America's sexual wars.

I have gone on about Soros both because he is throwing around enormous sums of money and because he could, like the Ford Foundation of the 1960's, become a pacesetter for his peers. He is 25 years your senior, has begun to devote much of his energy to philanthropy, and has plainly chosen to do it himself rather than leaving it to others—or leaving it behind. But is he doing more good than ill? That is a real question.

WHICH BRINGS me back to you. Although we have never met, I believe I know enough about you to think you appreciate the conditions that have allowed you to accomplish what you have accomplished. ("I'm rooting for Hong Kong," you wrote after a recent visit to China.) Without a free society, a liberal culture, a dynamic economy, a stable polity, the steadying rule of law, a meritocratic social structure, a sturdy civil society, a not-too-meddlesome government, and a nation mostly at peace, wealth like yours simply does not come into being. And yet, if the history I have recounted is any guide, the chances are strong that, understand all this though you may, your fortune could well end up like other fortunes before it: squandered, or misspent.

To be frank about it, the start you have already made in philanthropy is not exactly encouraging. Besides writing checks to Harvard, Stanford, the United Way, and various population-planning outfits, you have made some distressing moves. "The Road Ahead" technology-training program you have established seems unobjectionable enough, but selecting an arm of the nation's largest teachers' union to administer it was either misguided or misinformed. The National Education Association (NEA) has stood behind virtually every destructive pedagogical fad of the last 30 years, and has blocked every sensible reform. To put it in terms I am sure you will understand, the damage done by the NEA to American education exceeds anything that the antitrust division of the Justice Department might ever do to Microsoft.

As for your most conspicuous effort to date, a handsome gift of $200 million to help low-income communities obtain electronic hardware, software, and training to bring libraries "into the digital age," it, admittedly, has the virtue of being safe—a lot safer than propping up the education establishment or meddling in sexual politics in Eastern Europe. Who can be against libraries? Moreover, you are promoting something you know well and care a great deal about: computer technology and Internet access for everyman.

But libraries in the end are mainly mirrors of our culture and society, not shapers of it, and this is a moment for shaping—or rather reshaping. Think of philanthropy as you conceived of the software business: as a place that needs infusions of vision and fresh ideas as well as capital and hard work. If you seek immortality via good deeds, you could earn it by creating new institutions in fields that need them, and, crucially, by making sure these institutions embody healthy rather than destructive values.

Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller, for example, both started universities. Today we could use some new ones that would stand as rebukes to the warrens of petty specialization and even pettier political correctness that too many established universities have become. They would not have the prestige of a Harvard or a Stanford at the outset, and you could not be certain they would not eventually go off the tracks. But that risk might be mitigated by devising internal structures different from the present arrangements—where is it written that the faculty must be in charge?—or by limiting what they could spend your money to do.

But institutions need not be big—or new—to make a difference. There are lots of little ones around that are already doing sound work, and there would be still more if you were to help lower the entry barriers. Many are faith-based social-service or educational organizations that care for the ill, feed the hungry, wean the addicted, and teach the young. Some participate in the United Way, which is already a recipient of your largesse; but many do not. Mainstream foundations often shun these islets of civil society, precisely because they stress responsibilities rather than rights, because they teach traditional moral and religious lessons, or because they insist their clients behave properly. Such start-from-scratch "alternative" institutions deserve your attention. Not only do they accomplish much with slender overhead, but they are also most apt to embody the core values of a liberal society.



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IF YOU were truly ambitious, though, I have still another suggestion, again drawn from the field I happen to know best—education—but tailor-made for your enterprising spirit.

One of the most promising developments in elementary and secondary education is the spread of "charter schools": independent public schools, founded by parents, teachers, community organizations, and even by firms operating for profit. Breaking free of the bureaucratic monopoly, these schools follow their own curricular and organizational stars. They are still *public* schools—open to all, supported with tax dollars, and accountable for their results to whatever public authority issues their charter. The difference is this: if they do not deliver the results they promise, they do not survive. Nobody is forced to attend them. Like anybody else in the marketplace, including a behemoth like Microsoft, they must attract and retain customers.

The U.S. has about 750 charter schools today, up from 500 a year ago. Especially for low-income and minority youngsters, they are starting to provide a stunning alternative to the wretched offerings of our public-school "systems." But charter schools have a big problem. Their political enemies—teachers' unions, in particular the NEA, school-board associations, superintendents, education colleges, and the rest—have contrived to deny them capital funding. They get operating dollars (supposedly equivalent to what regular public schools get, though in reality often less), but no money for buildings, for technology, or even for desks and chairs. That lack of capital, together with politically-inspired ceilings on the number of charters that can be granted, is the principal barrier to the establishment of hundreds of additional schools.

Charter schools are what Walter Annenberg should have invested in, but did not. Suppose you took it upon yourself to seize his missed opportunity. Suppose you agreed to invest, say, $2 million in each of the 2,250 additional charter schools that will be needed to reach the Clinton administration's goal of 3,000 such schools by the year 2000. The money would go to capital costs—bricks and mortar, computer networks, encyclopedias, swings, furniture, and so on. The bill would come to $4.5 billion, barely a tenth of your present fortune.

BUT CHARTER schools are not the point. I offer them in the same spirit in which I offer the example of new universities, or support for faith-based social-service agencies: as an illustration of how you could, if you had a mind to, create promising alternative institutions in a country where, thanks in some measure to misguided philanthropy, a number of the established ones have become baneful to a well-ordered society. Andrew Carnegie built libraries to fill an information void. You could fund institutions to fill a void that is civic and moral.

And so we come full circle to the Ford Foundation's now-forty-year-old judgment that the "establishment" needed shaking up. Today's establishment needs shaking-up, too. But the parallel between then and now is deceptive. Many of our major institutions have been profoundly damaged by the radicalism that was enthusiastically subsidized by American philanthropy in the 60's and 70's. Today's great opportunity is, by contrast, to help restore and reinforce the social order on which your own success rests, and, in the bargain, to ensure that tomorrow's Bill Gates will have the same chance you did.

SINCERELY,

CHESTER E. FINN, JR.

P.S. Oh, yes: spend the money yourself. Or, if you must create a foundation, do not let it outlive you by more than a generation. And do not permit it to give a penny to the NEA.



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# Forgotten Communism

*Alain Besançon*

In my country, it is still possible to provoke a scandal by raising in public the issue of the crimes committed by Communism—and an even greater scandal by suggesting that not only in the enormity of its crimes but in its very nature, Soviet Communism can be compared with that other great evil of our century, Nazism. This was illustrated once again by a recent French best-seller, *The Black Book of Communism*, an 846-page compilation by six historians with an introduction that points out a number of commonalities between the two totalitarian systems. The book has raised a storm of controversy in intellectual and political circles, and has even caused an uproar in parliament.

The controversy is illuminating, less for the particular positions being espoused than for revealing just how great, still, is the resistance to an idea that has long achieved the status of a consensus among those who have studied these matters closely—the idea, that is, that Bolshevism and Nazism are related phenomena: fraternal twins, to use the apt phrase of the French historian Pierre Chaunu.

Alain Besançon, *the eminent French historian, is the author of* The Soviet Syndrome *and* The Intellectual Origins of Leninism. *His new book,* An Intellectual History of Iconoclasm, *will be brought out next year by the University of Chicago Press. The present essay is a somewhat revised version of his inaugural lecture to the French Academy, into which he was inducted in December 1996. The text of the lecture has also appeared in French in the December 1997 issue of* Commentaire.

These two monstrous ideologies, each a bastard offshoot of German Romantic philosophy, came to power in the 20th century, and each took it as its goal to bring about a perfect society by uprooting the element of evil that stood in its way. In the case of Communism, the malignancy was defined as property, hence as the owners of property, and hence, since evil would persist even after the liquidation of this "class," as anyone corrupted by the spirit of "capitalism," which had made its insinuating way into the ranks of the Communist party itself. In the case of Nazism, the malignant principle was located in the so-called inferior races, first and foremost the Jews but, since evil would persist even after their extermination, in others as well, even in those elements of the "Aryan race" whose "purity" had become polluted.

In addressing the problem of evil as they saw it, both Communism and Nazism drew their authority from science. They were creating a "new man," and to this end they proposed to reeducate all of humanity. More: each professed to be motivated by philanthropic impulses. It was *because* it sought the welfare of the German people, and meant to render a service to humanity, that National Socialism was willing to shoulder the "burden" of ridding the world of Jews. Leninism was even more solicitous of humankind and by definition more universalist in its mission than Nazism, whose program was not so easily exportable. But both doctrines held out elevated ideals, calculated to arouse enthusiastic devotion and heroic deeds in their followers.



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It was, finally, in the name of those selfsame ideals that Nazism and Communism alike arrogated to themselves the right to murder whole categories of men, which is exactly what they proceeded to do upon assuming power, and on a scale previously unknown in history. And that is why it is proper to judge them both, in their very nature, as criminal systems. Equally criminal? Anyone who has studied the two systems' record of homicide—the Nazi unparalleled in its ferocity, the Communist unparalleled in its extent—or contemplated the fate of the millions upon millions of human beings whose souls and spirits were crushed even though their bodies survived, must respond, I think, simply and firmly: yes, equally criminal.

But this raises another question: how is it that, today, the two systems are treated so *un*equally in historical memory, to the point where one of them, Soviet Communism, though a still-recent presence on the world scene, has already been all but forgotten?

THERE IS no need to rehearse the facts in detail. As early as 1989, the Polish opposition itself urged that the former Communist regime in that country be forgiven its sins. In most of the former East European satellite nations, there has been no strong drive to punish those responsible for depriving their fellow citizens of their liberty or for corrupting, brutalizing, and murdering them over the course of two or three generations. Except in Germany and the Czech Republic, Communists have been allowed to remain active politically, and indeed they have regained power in a number of places. In Russia and other former Soviet republics, Communist officials have likewise remained in place, including in the police.

In the West, this *de-facto* amnesty has met with widespread approval—but then, many in the West have their own history of accommodation with Communism, which they appear no more eager to confront. To speak only of France, the fact that the Communist party compiled over the decades an ignominious record of collaboration with the Kremlin, a record now fully exposed and documented, in no way prevents it from being accepted at the heart of French democratic politics.

By contrast, the cursed memory of Nazism seems to intensify every day. An ample literature expands yearly. Museums, library exhibitions, movies, novels, and memoirs are devoted to keeping the horror fresh in mind, and the term Nazi itself has become a shorthand for the most heinous opprobrium conceivable. Being linked to it, however tenuously, is enough to bring utter disgrace upon an artist or writer: in the same year the French-Romanian writer E.M. Cioran was revealed to have had a prewar past tainted with Nazi associations, and was unanimously condemned for it, the works of the surrealist Louis Aragon were published in a Pléiade edition to a no less unanimous concert of praise; no one mentioned Aragon's record as a Stalinist, other than to excuse it.

Through the French Minitel network I recently checked the frequency of certain key words in one of the country's major evening newspapers during the period 1990 to mid-1997. Under "Nazism" I found 480 mentions; under "Stalinism," seven. In the same period, the word "Auschwitz" occurred 105 times, but "Kolyma" only twice, "Magadan" once, and "Kuropaty" not at all. The phrase "famine in the Ukraine," referring to an event that in 1933 alone killed five to six million people, occurred not even a single time in the seven years following the collapse of the regime that had been directly responsible for this human disaster.

It is right and proper to feel indignant at this disparity. "All I ask," declared the French writer Alfred Grosser in 1989, "is that, when one weighs responsibility for past crimes, the same criteria be applied to everyone." Exactly so; but the same criteria are *not* applied, and for the historian (as opposed to the political moralist) the first question is, why? Without pretending to exhaust this very difficult subject, I want to enumerate a number of possible reasons.

• NAZISM IS BETTER known than Communism. The closet, so full of skeletons, was opened wide by the Allied troops in 1945, and the worst was known right away. Then, too, several West European countries had directly experienced Nazi occupation and/or military aggression, and even today the memory has still not faded. The crimes of the Nazis, moreover, were flagrant and relatively open, with clear victimizers and clear victims—unlike in the case of Communism, many of whose victims were morally compromised by virtue of their membership in the party. The gas chambers, devised to exterminate industrially a defined portion of humanity, were a unique phenomenon, and when the camps were liberated the awful human evidence they revealed was blatant and undeniable. By contrast, the Gulag and the Chinese Laogaï are still shrouded in mist, distant objects that are only indirectly known, mostly through literary rather than photographic testimony. (In Cambodia, the mass graves are now open.)

• THE JEWISH PEOPLE have taken upon themselves the solemn duty of remembering and memo-



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rializing the Holocaust. For Jews, this is a moral, indeed a religious, obligation, and humanity as a whole is indebted to them for assuming and fulfilling it with thoroughness and determination. Thanks to the power of Jewish memory, the facts of the Shoah have imprinted themselves on the consciousness of all, and a truly perverse stubbornness is required to forget or evade them. Representatives of the Christian world, too, have come to examine their collective conscience, and to acknowledge in sorrow and penitence the Church's role in perpetuating anti-Semitism.*

• THE EXPERIENCE OF World War II, in which a military alliance was formed between the democracies and the Soviet Union, weakened Western sensitivity to Communism both as an idea and as a reality, producing a sort of breakdown of the intellectual immune system. To fight with a whole heart, a democracy needs its allies to possess a certain degree of respectability; if necessary, that respectability will be conferred on them as a gift. Stalin encouraged this process by making sure that Communist ideology and Communist slogans were kept in reserve, hidden from view, while the military efforts of the Soviet people and the heroic exploits of Soviet soldiers were brought to the fore and lauded in purely nationalist terms.

Unlike East Europeans, West Europeans did not directly experience the arrival of the Red Army or witness its brutality. On the contrary, it was seen as a liberating force, just like the other Allied armies—hardly the impression of the Baltic peoples or the Poles. And the Soviets were also among the judges at the war-crimes tribunal at Nuremberg (where they tried to foist onto the Nazis a number of crimes committed by Communist-led forces, including the 1940 massacre of thousands of Polish army officers at Katyn in Poland).

All this contributed to the inconsistent and sometimes lackluster postwar response of the West to the Communist menace. The democracies had consented to very heavy sacrifices in order to defeat the Nazi regime. They would consent only to lesser sacrifices in order to contain the Soviet Union, and in the end would even help it hang on out of a concern for "stability." Their attitude was not—could not—be the same as it had been toward Nazism, nor their judgment balanced, nor their memory impartial.

• ONE OF the great successes of the Soviet regime was to promulgate and, eventually, to impose on the world its own ideological understanding of how political systems should be classified. Lenin reduced them essentially to two polar opposites, socialism and capitalism, a dichotomy preserved by Stalin until the 1930's. According to this scheme, capitalism, also known as imperialism, included in its purview liberal, social-democratic, and fascist regimes, as well as National Socialism. A different scheme emerged in the 30's to accommodate the new Soviet policy of building "popular fronts." Now the spectrum ranged from socialism—that is to say, the Soviet Union—through the bourgeois democracies (liberal and/or social-democratic), to, finally, fascism. Grouped together under the last category were Nazism, Mussolini-type fascism, the authoritarian regimes of Spain, Portugal, Austria, Hungary, Poland, and so forth, and extreme right-wing factions in liberal societies.

Whatever the specific typology, Nazism in these schemes was erased as a category unto itself, and attached definitively either to capitalism or to right-wing fascism. It became the absolute incarnation of the Right, while Soviet socialism represented the absolute incarnation of the Left. In this way Nazism and Communism took their respective places in the great magnetic field of 20th-century politics.

To appreciate the sleight of hand involved, one need only recall that to an earlier generation of historians, it had been perfectly clear that both Italian fascism and German Nazism had *socialist* roots. Thus, Elie Halévy's classic *History of European Socialism* (1937) devotes a chapter each to the socialism of fascist Italy and the socialism of Nazi Germany. (The latter, indeed, had explicitly declared itself to be anti-capitalist.) Then there is the no less compelling scheme proposed as early as 1951 by Hannah Arendt, who spotlighted the essentially consanguineous nature of Nazism and Communism that I remarked upon at the outset, and divided these two representatives of modern totalitarianism from liberal and authoritarian regimes alike.

So great was the triumph of the Communist definition of reality, however, that even today it remains deeply embedded in historical consciousness. French high-school and university textbooks, for example, still "read" the political spectrum from Left to Right, going from the Soviet Union on the Left, to the liberal democracies (with their own Lefts and Rights),

* It is relevant here that in the Soviet Union under the Communists, it was forbidden to single out the Jews as objects of Nazi genocide; only undifferentiated "victims of fascism" were recognized. No doubt this was in part intended to mask the regime's own anti-Semitic policies, not to mention the notorious record of collaboration with Nazi death squads that had been compiled in places like Ukraine. To this day, I have been told, Claude Lanzmann's 1985 film *Shoah* has not been shown in Russia.



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to the various fascisms (German, Italian, Spanish, and so forth). This is but an attenuated version of what might be called the Soviet Vulgate.

• NAZISM LASTED TWELVE years; European Communism, depending on the country, between 50 and 70. This inordinate length of time produced a kind of auto-amnesia in the affected lands themselves. In the course of it, civil society was smashed, elites were successively destroyed, reeducated, and replaced, and almost everyone, from top to bottom, was exposed to the perils and the temptations of compromise and self-betrayal. As for those capable of disinterested thought, they were largely deprived of an accurate knowledge of their history or the proper tools of scholarly research. In reading the works of the Soviet dissidents, which comprise the regime's only true literature, one is exposed to heartrending laments and boundless grief, but very little dispassionate analysis. (Exceptions include Andrei Amalrik's *Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984?*, which appeared in English translation in 1969, and certain essays by Aleksandr Zinoviev.)

Today, too, however painful the memory of the past—or just because it is so painful—young Russian historians tend to avert their gaze from the Communist period, and thereby to consign it to oblivion. Meanwhile, the Russian state is again closing the relevant archives. As for the circle of dissidents, who did preserve a lucid memory of Communism, it rapidly broke down after 1991 and has not found a place for itself in the new order of things. An entity that means to perpetuate memory must attain a certain critical mass in society, whether by dint of numbers, political strength, or cultural influence. This the dissidents have not done—and neither, for that matter, have the spokesmen for the Armenians, the Ukrainians, the Kazakhs, the Chechens, or the Tibetans, not to mention many other victims of Communist terror.

• AFTER THE DISSOLUTION of a totalitarian regime, nothing is so problematic as the effort to reconstitute the normal workings of conscience, to revive the capability of making normal political and moral discriminations. In this respect, post-Nazi Germany was in a better position than post-Soviet Russia. In Germany, civil society had not yet been destroyed down to the ground. Judged, punished, denazified under the scrutiny of the Western allies, Germany was able to participate, however imperfectly, in a process of purification, of self-judging, of remembering, and even of repenting.

This has not been the case in Eastern Europe, partly for reasons that I have already adumbrated but partly because of circumstances for which the West bears its share of historic responsibility. Not only, for 70 long years, did the democracies fail to call the Communists adequately to account, but Western political and cultural elites tacitly or explicitly accepted what I have called the Soviet Vulgate, according to which political virtue resided inherently on the Left (under "socialism"), and the presumption of political sinfulness on the Right (under "capitalism"). Among Western scholars and others, Leninism is still too often characterized as a kind of meteorological accident, an unfortunate detour from a project that in all essential aspects remains as honorable as it ever was.

For centuries, indeed, the conscience of the West has been fixated on finding the seat of absolute evil in the heart of the West itself. In our own day, the evil has been located now in South Africa during the era of apartheid, now in the United States during the period of the Vietnam war, but always in Nazi Germany, the touchstone to which all other local manifestations of evil are constantly referred. From this exercise in radical fault-finding the Soviet Union, North Korea, China, Cuba, and other Communist countries have been exempted. Or perhaps one could say that the unflinching attention to Nazism and its various alleged successors has functioned as a kind of cover, making it possible to scant the no-longer-deniable crimes of Communism.

This attitude enormously complicates and burdens the indispensable task of achieving moral clarity in post-totalitarian societies. If our century has been marked by unprecedented barbarity, it has been marked no less by a disastrous blurring of conscience, and it would be a vast shame if we were to bequeath our own falsified notions of history to the century now coming upon us.

BUT PERHAPS there are grounds for hope. We forget that it took years for a full awareness of Nazism to make itself felt in the consciousness of the West. The simple fact is that Nazism, as a political phenomenon, exceeded what people thought possible, and the imagination was often powerless to grasp it. The deeds done in the name of Communism open an abyss no less deep, one that has been protected by the same human reflex to avoid or deny the unthinkable. Could it be that time, whose function is to unveil the truth, will here again do its indispensable work? One can only pray that it will.



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# High-Tech: The Future Face of War?
## *A Debate*

1.

### Alvin H. Bernstein & Martin Libicki

FEW AMERICANS will have forgotten the remarkable video footage released by the Pentagon in the opening days of the Persian Gulf war in January 1991. Precision-guided munitions (PGM's) performed their tasks with seemingly perfect accuracy, descending chimneys, threading their way through the air shafts of bunkers, and striking the center spans of the narrowest of bridges. In the technology of warfare, it seemed, our military had leapt dramatically ahead of enemies and allies alike.

Of course, there was also something very old-fashioned about Operation Desert Storm. With fighter planes sweeping the skies of enemy aircraft and tanks advancing across a broad front, the scene in many ways bore the familiar look of a campaign from World War II. If a similar confrontation were to occur today, not to mention a decade from now, it would take on a very different cast. For the information-processing and communications technologies that made the American armed forces seem so invincible in the Persian Gulf are part of a profound, and much-publicized, revolution in military affairs (RMA) that is affecting every aspect of our warfighting posture. That revolution is continuing apace, and not just in the United States.

That, indeed, is the problem. Though the U.S. has driven the revolution from the start, we now run the risk of being overtaken by it, as other nations develop the know-how that may one day render American tanks, planes, and troops as vulnerable as were the hapless Iraqis seven years ago.

THE PROMISE of high-tech warfare has been with us for some time. In 1978, then-Under Secretary of Defense William Perry predicted that the United States would soon be able to "see all high-value targets on the battlefield," "make a direct hit on any target we can see," and "destroy any target we can hit." Twenty years later, much of the technology for these capabilities has moved off the drawing board.

Sensors are one important element in this new arsenal. They can be deployed as needed in air or in space, on the ocean or on the ground. The signals they detect can then be integrated into the military's increasingly dense communications grid, allowing enemy targets to be located more rapidly and accurately in every sort of terrain. In deserts, plains, fields, and at sea, the ability to see everything worth seeing is already here. Even in more

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difficult terrain, such as mountains, jungles, and cities, U.S. forces can see faster and finer than ever before. In future wars, the battlefield will, in effect, be illuminated.

Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV's) offer an example of how sensors might be carried to the enemy. On the expensive end of the shelf, the U.S. military already has several UAV's that can fly thousands of miles to the battlefield and roam above it at a height of twenty kilometers. These UAV's can be equipped with still cameras, detectors that can "see" targets in the infrared and high ultraviolet range, or synthetic aperture radars that can peer through clouds. At the cheap end, Department of Defense laboratories have developed UAV's that can fly beneath the clouds with simpler payloads like video cameras. At a cost of $5,000 each, they are far cheaper than the least expensive missile capable of shooting them down. Even smaller short-range UAV's are in the works.

Precision-guided munitions, which can convert the visibility provided by sensors into assured destruction, comprise the second element in the ongoing revolution. These include tactical missiles, torpedoes, laser-guided bombs and shells, and, at short range, armored rounds. Although, as we saw in the Persian Gulf, PGM's are already an important component of the U.S. arsenal, the technology is racing ahead.

Early-model PGM's required a human operator to sight the target and keep the munition aimed at it, a dangerous job that exposed the targeteer to the battlefield. PGM's then grew sophisticated enough to find targets on their own, but the weapons tended to be very costly and performed poorly in bad weather. Today, faster, lighter, less detectable, more maneuverable, and more discriminating PGM's are coming on line. They "know" their own position, and know where they are meant to strike. Most crucially, they are cheap, which means they can be used against many targets or can overcome defenses by being launched in swarms.

In yet another key development, the earth is now being mapped with astonishing accuracy. Global-positioning systems can already locate any point on the ground or in the air within a five-meter radius. As three-dimensional imagery of the earth continues to be collected in vast quantities by satellites and other means, cartographers will soon be able to pin down the location of virtually any natural or man-made object, thus enhancing the lethal potential of precision-guided weapons.

Each of these various technological advances is a breakthrough in itself. Together, and once they have become fully integrated, they will lead to a new kind of military organization, for the simple reason that expertise in operating the new weapons will not be the sole preserve of any one branch of the armed forces. They will also lead to a wholly new kind of military logic, whose basic thrust can be summed up in the term "distance warfare." Instead of the set-piece battles of yesteryear, warfare will likely consist of four processes, performed in lightning-quick succession. A battlefield will be scanned; its potential targets will be identified; those identified will be ranked in order of importance; and, finally, they will be destroyed.

THE ADVENT of distance warfare is fraught with implications not only for the battlefield but, in the largest sense, for America's position in the world and its global strategy. Most saliently, it will change the very foundation of our alliances. American forces stationed in, say, Germany or South Korea will come to have more of a symbolic than an operational value, while the willingness of our allies to allow us to pre-position sensors and precision weapons will become crucial. Coming to the aid of beleaguered friends will mean, in the first instance, supplying military intelligence comprehensive and detailed enough to allow them to see all important enemy targets. In effect, the United States will be able to cast a spotlight for its friends and reduce the advantages an aggressor enjoys from surprise. The U.S. need not formally show up at all or even leave obvious evidence of its presence.

Should more direct intervention be needed, distance warfare holds out the possibility of deterrence with minimal loss of life. If a future adversary begins to mass its forces in order to threaten an American ally, we can respond by deploying sensors in the likely combat area. This, while not as provocative as dropping mines or sending in troops, will nonetheless be a highly menacing step. The heavy weapons of the would-be invader will become vulnerable instantaneously, threatening the destruction of his forces within hours or even minutes.

We have already had a taste of how this works in NATO's success thus far in halting the bloodshed in Yugoslavia. In the opening days of involvement there, NATO forces used electronic warfare to home in on and destroy Serbia's intricate system of radar and anti-aircraft missiles. Then, with the skies safe for its own aircraft, NATO destroyed other Serbian targets with a degree of precision that exceeded what had been on display during the Persian Gulf war. Next, at the 1995 peace talks in Dayton, Ohio, U.S. negotiators took their Serbian counterparts on



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a "virtual flight" over Bosnia. The ostensible purpose of this computerized tour was to determine the width of the corridor between Sarajevo and Goradze, but the effect of seeing their country modeled in exquisite detail convinced the Serbians that they were, in effect, fighting in the nude.

WHAT ALL this suggests is that crucial to the outcome of war in the future will be the capacity to see an enemy's military assets, plus the capacity to hide one's own. For the moment, the U.S. is unrivaled at both tasks. A vital and growing portion of our arsenal, most notably our collection of stealth aircraft, is already designed to do its work undetected. As for the ability to watch others, we view the world with Argus eyes: space-based sensors, wide-body surveillance aircraft like the AWACS, ground-searching JSTARS aircraft that carry radar capable of taking three-dimensional pictures at night or through clouds of moving targets, devices that detect heat and collect electronic emissions, and miniature drones that can carry video cameras and cloud-penetrating radar.

Yet these and all the other weapons of distance warfare are not foolproof: every electronic measure invariably calls into existence countermeasures, and the cycle is accelerated by the ready availability on today's open market of many of the technologies that have made our armed forces so formidable. The international trade in precision weapons is fueled by equipment of European manufacture and by leftovers from Russian and American stockpiles. For countries that wish to see the battlefield as well as we can, the essential components—personal computers, video cameras, high-gain microphones, cellular phones, receivers for global-positioning systems and direct-broadcast satellites, CD-ROM disks with enough memory to contain a map of the entire United States detailed to a five-meter scale—are not hard to come by. More than twenty countries manufacture UAV's. Iraq would have needed only one medium-grade model to learn that coalition forces were preparing the "left-hook" attack that took it by surprise in the Persian Gulf war.

Even the exploitation of outer space, an arena where the United States enjoys a substantial lead, can be used against us by an adversary far less sophisticated than we. Russia still possesses its own global-positioning system, Glonass, and has demonstrated a willingness to sell its satellite imagery, which can show objects down to the size of an automobile. France, Japan, and India have comparable space-based surveillance technology, and American corporations are preparing to launch satellites that will make live intelligence and secure communications available to anyone willing to pay for it.

Nor does the United States enjoy a monopoly of skilled personnel capable of integrating and operating such equipment. South Korea is educating more engineering Ph.D.'s per capita than the U.S. Indonesia and Brazil already manufacture aircraft and operate satellites, and tens of thousands of Chinese and Indians have received advanced technical training.

IN SHORT, THOUGH the benefits of the new technology are great, so too is the peril if we ignore what technology may do to us in the hands of an adversary. In light of that potential peril, indeed, the U.S. military's ability to project power into distant theaters could emerge as our Achilles' heel, leaving us vulnerable far from home. The United States has few alternatives but to maintain its leading edge by increasing the range, speed, and accuracy of our precision weapons and the systems that support them.

Doing so can be fairly inexpensive (as such things go), especially if we act quickly. For an investment of several billion dollars a year over the coming decades, we could steadily upgrade our information-gathering hardware and software and train the personnel to use them. As for precision weapons, the price in many cases has been falling for some years. A cruise missile that cost $2 million a decade ago, for instance, now goes for just over $0.5 million. Kits to guide bombs by information from global-positioning-system satellites cost $14,000 each—less than a quarter of what they were projected to cost a few years ago.

True, falling prices may be offset as potential adversaries grow more sophisticated. Enough sensors will have to be deployed to foil attempts to evade them. Military communications will have to be made more secure and jam-resistant. And the range of precision weapons will have to be extended. Nonetheless, such investments need not amount to more than a fraction of our defense spending.

How much, exactly? A few months ago the Pentagon published its congressionally-mandated Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). In this blueprint for how to spend the taxpayers' next trillion defense dollars, the Defense Department, in the person of Secretary William S. Cohen, has recommended that the U.S. keep abreast of developing military technologies by taking $20 billion more each year from existing budgets. Though Cohen insists these additional funds can come from base closings and greater efficiency, they are more like-



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ly to be squeezed instead from more conventional forces, further reducing their size and readiness.

This seeming sacrifice of short-term capability has set off alarms in some quarters. In the view of a number of defense experts and military historians, the traditional components of American military might—namely, troop strength and conventional armaments—must remain central to our defense planning. Yet if Cohen can be faulted, it is for not going *far enough* in rethinking the future of our forces. In an annual defense budget of $250 billion, $20 billion (if even that is approved) is a token amount to devote to what is surely our most pressing defense need: maintaining our superiority in information technology in the face of what is already an unprecedented proliferation of the most sophisticated military hardware.

It is true, as the critics charge, that under such a program, tanks, ships, and aircraft—the purchase, maintenance, and manning of which constitute the most expensive segment of the current budget—will necessarily suffer cutbacks. But that is as it should be in an age in which information and precision will take precedence over force-on-force confrontation. Under the circumstances of the future, the more conventional elements of our current arsenal will not disappear, but they will take on different primary functions, becoming "stand-off platforms" for the rapid deployment of sensors and precision weapons or being used to secure territory after the smart weapons have done their job. The sheer number of our tanks, ships, and aircraft will be less important than how well-integrated they are with the new technology—a matter that the Defense Department, for all its interest in a high-tech military, has yet to address sufficiently.

NONE OF this is to say that it will never again be necessary to put American troops in harm's way. But distance warfare, because of its relative safety, may offer an antidote to our persistent post-Vietnam aversion to the use of force in international affairs and to growing sensitivity about casualties among our own and even enemy soldiers. Indeed, in an era of rising isolationist sentiment, the tactics of distance warfare are likely to become the most muscular and credible tools available to the architects of American foreign policy. The sooner we grasp both the strategic necessities and the opportunities of the new military reality in which we find ourselves, the better off we shall be.

## 2.

## Frederick W. Kagan

IN THE history of warfare, it seems clear in hindsight that advocates of new technologies, and of the radical reorganizations of armed force they require, have always been proved right. In the long run, technology has repeatedly transformed the practice of war. Those who adapt have conquered, while those who remain stagnant have been vanquished. Unfortunately, history also makes it clear that, for every technological visionary who gets the future right, there are at least ten who get it wrong. Sometimes it is better to be a skeptic.

The current moment is one of those times. On all sides we hear of a technology-driven revolution in military affairs (RMA) that is a prelude to a military millennium. Warfare, we are told, will never be as it has been before. Information technology will make it cheap, bloodless, and fast. With a modest amount of capital investment, very small "information-age" forces will give us guaranteed predominance forever.

This millenarian view is not merely wrong, it is highly dangerous. If put into practice along the lines conceived of by its proponents, it is likely to lead to embarrassments, defeats, high casualties, and the loss, at least temporarily, of America's position in the world.

The millenarian view can be summed up as follows. In future wars, information technology and smart weapons will allow us to see everything, hit everything, and kill everything the enemy has, while keeping our own casualties to low levels, possibly zero. We are not likely to need ground forces, or to have to engage the enemy with tactical aircraft or warships, except in the final phases of a campaign that will have been won by precision-guided munitions (PGM's) fired from "stand-off platforms" hundreds of miles away. The destruction by this means of the enemy's key communications nodes will lead to the complete debilitation of his forces, while the destruction of his long-range weapons systems will ensure that he cannot inflict casualties on any landing force required for

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mopping-up operations. Fundamentally, war is likely to be decided by the first fast salvo, after which the enemy, seeing that he is doomed, will surrender—assuming that he can still find a working transmitter.

Objections to this vision may be raised on several grounds.

Will we, in fact, be able to see, hit, and kill everything the enemy has? Information-age weapons systems, at least as they are currently conceived, are highly vulnerable. The sensors that can "see everything," for instance, will be almost completely dependent on satellites to communicate their information. But satellites, if they are to serve their purpose, must move along predictable orbits, and the theoretical problem of devising a weapon to kill such communications satellites is easily solved. The United States, which (unwisely) has eschewed any system of ballistic-missile defense for its own territory, does not think in terms of anti-satellite measures; others do, and will.

Even assuming that our satellites remain unmolested, there are a number of ways of "seeing" military targets, and each has its special problems. Sensors can indeed detect electromagnetic emissions in given locations. Emissions from transmitters, for example, may enable us to destroy portions of an enemy's communications system, while emissions from radars will help us attack early-warning and targeting systems. But if the enemy holds transmitters and radars in reserve, activating them only when absolutely necessary, then our initial strike is unlikely to catch them all. In addition, a cunning or ruthless enemy may place "dummy" emitters near, for instance, children's hospitals, tricking us into causing civilian damage that can redound catastrophically to our disadvantage.

A problem with all electromagnetic sensors (including infrared ones) is that they are vulnerable to confusion. This is so whether or not one can literally "eyeball" each target while the strike is being launched. Optical reconnaissance depends on the ability to look at an object and either know or guess its function. Camouflage against optical reconnaissance entails designing objects in such a way that they do not appear to be what they are.

Some items—tanks, for instance—are hard to camouflage, but many dangerous weapons systems probably will not be, and we will not always be able to tell what a thing is by looking at it. If, for instance, a truck that has been parked inside a closed and windowless building loads up, leaves the building, drives across country, enters another closed, windowless building, and unloads, what is its cargo? Is it carrying diapers, or a mobile intermediate-range ballistic missile?

EVEN IF we can "see" everything, and know what it is in time to do something about it, will we be able to kill everything we see? Perhaps—*if* the targets remain stationary or, in the event they move, we retain the full and undisrupted use of our sensors and satellites; and *if* the targets are killable by the relatively small warheads on most smart weapons; and *if* the enemy takes no measures to prevent our weapons from landing. But if any of these conditions is wanting, then the situation will hardly be so promising.

Smart weapons necessarily have the following characteristics: (a) they are guided by electronics; (b) they rely on electromagnetic communications; and (c) being lightweight, they are not heavily armored. As a result, they are open to attack in a number of ways. Any device that can generate a powerful enough directed-energy beam can be used to scramble the "brain" of a smart missile, causing it to become merely a flying chunk of metal packed with TNT. Powerful lasers, locked on to a rocket-fuel container, can heat it to the point of explosion. It may be possible to garble or prevent communication between a missile and its satellite or other link.

If communication is broken between a smart weapon and the sensors guiding it, then the weapon will have to locate the target on its own—hard enough in normal circumstances, many times harder if the target is moving. Imagine, for example, that one of our arsenal ships, lying 600 kilometers off an enemy's coast, fires a smart missile at a tank, and then contact is lost between the missile and the sensors that designated the target. Assuming that the missile is traveling at about 2,250 miles per hour (about Mach-3), it will take roughly ten minutes to arrive at its target. In those ten minutes, the tank, traveling at about 60 miles per hour, will have been able to move ten miles in any direction. The incoming missile, then, will have to search an area of some 300 square miles to locate its original target—assuming that the tank remains visible.

Keep in mind, next, that the higher the missile flies, the better the target it will offer to enemy anti-missile defenses. For the easiest way to kill a smart missile is with another missile. Such an anti-missile missile would not even have to hit its target; a near-miss would do the trick.

Under all these circumstances, will the missile find the tank? The outcome is far from clear. When "bombing machines" first came into promi-



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nence in the 1920's and 1930's, military millenarians declared that war was obsolete: "the bomber," in the words of Stanley Baldwin, British Prime Minister in the 1930's, "will always get through." Unfortunately, the bomber did not always get through, and neither will the missile.

The belief that our systems will always work and the enemy's will not is inconsistent. Either there are countermeasures to smart weapons, or there are not. If there are, then our enemies will have them, too. If not, then we will be as vulnerable to their smart systems as we imagine they are to ours. Millenarians take comfort in the assurance that, for the foreseeable future, we will remain in possession of "information overmatch." That may be true as far as it goes; but an enemy does not have to match our systems, he only has to defeat selected portions of them. When one considers the effect of the loss of satellite communications, or the damage that can be done to us by even moderately effective antimissile devices, it becomes clear that we, too, have "centers of gravity," the destruction of which can unhinge an entire operation.

DEMOCRACIES DO not like to spend money on defense in peacetime, for the excellent reason that such expenditures detract from other areas of higher political, social, and economic importance. In a period in which we have no "peer competitors" on the horizon, it will be harder, not easier, to convince Congress to allocate resources to defense—including technology. The practical result of this is that on the future battlefield, there will probably be many more enemy targets than smart bombs to take them out. We may be able to destroy critical communications nodes, radar stations, and troop concentrations (if the enemy is accommodating enough to concentrate his troops), but we will have to leave some portion of his military might untouched, and that portion is likely to be substantial.

But, millenarians might rejoin, this residual military power will have been knocked out of communication, confused, and uncoordinated—in other words, ripe for an attack by more conventional forces that can finish it off, *à la* Iraq in 1991. Unfortunately, finishing it off will not be the relative picnic it was then. Since we will never have enough PGM's to destroy the enemy forces *completely*, we will still have a very dangerous conventional conflict on our hands. And if we have spent the intervening years scrambling for every dime to equip ourselves with PGM's, we will not have enough troops well-enough trained to do the job.

Nor can we count upon an enemy's surrendering readily. Millenarians routinely mistake the means of war—killing people, destroying property, "servicing" targets—for the end, which is imposing one's will on the enemy and making him do one's bidding. An enemy whose commitment to war is weak to begin with may surrender upon being "disarmed." But history provides many examples of states fighting on after suffering crippling blows, including blows delivered by "stand-off" weapons systems. Britain under Nazi bombardment in 1940 offers one example, Iraq under American and allied bombardment in 1991 another.

If the enemy does fight on, we will still have to project ground forces from very distant bases, either by sea or by air. Here is one of the biggest problems with relying on stand-off weapons: we can never know what we have failed to destroy. An enemy who has retained any long-range weapons systems (for instance, by hiding them in concrete bunkers under hospitals), will be able to interfere with our deployments, and kill thousands of American soldiers at one stroke. Enemy systems, even if temporarily cut off from communications, will be able to maintain intermittent contact with key headquarters, some of which will probably have survived. Among weapons, even one surviving multiple-launch rocket system will be able to exact a price measured in thousands of American casualties.

In short, an enemy can make the "pacification" of his country a very arduous undertaking. Having destroyed most of his systems, we are unlikely to fail at this enterprise; but we will almost certainly suffer far higher casualties and have a much tougher time than the American people will have been led to expect—an outcome that could have been avoided had we treated the ground attack as decisive from the outset.

A final consideration is relevant here. The millenarian view assumes that we will always have the advantage of the first shot. But the U.S. has not fired the first shot in any of the major wars of this century, and future conflicts are unlikely to differ in this regard. America is a status-quo power, and it is in our nature to respond only when some other power has upset the international order. That being the case, a future opponent will have ample opportunity to strike first at whatever vulnerabilities he perceives, while our own counterstrike is likely to be much less calm and orderly than the millenarians imagine. This, too, will inevitably heighten the difficulty of any ensuing "mopping-up" operation.



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RAILROADS AND rapid-fire artillery, which turned World War I into a bloody stalemate, signaled a revolution in warfare—yet in many respects the art of war thereafter remained unchanged. Likewise when the tank and the airplane, developed in the 1930's, restored maneuver to the battlefield: warfare was again revolutionized, and again its fundamental nature remained unchanged. Twenty years from now, warfare is likely to be as different from warfare today as 1939 was from 1918—and as similar.

*America's first goal in any conflict is to deter* war. We are not likely to be any more successful at this with stand-off weapons systems than the Gulf war coalition was in 1991. Some enemies, even sophisticated ones, lack the imagination to be deterred by long-range strikes; it will take ground, air, and naval forces *in situ* to persuade them otherwise. In future crises as in past, an American President's first line of deterrence will be to deploy something into the theater in question.

The role of emerging technologies in these circumstances is a deep and complicated subject. That role certainly will be critical, and in some cases decisive. But to expect the god of technology to save us from the drudgery of war is folly. In thinking about the future, we would do better to dream less about the marvels of technology and consider instead the sorts of tasks the United States armed forces may actually be called upon to *perform.*

Even in a world without obvious threats, the basis of a successful American defense remains what it has been for almost a century: the ability to project highly-trained and well-equipped forces in decisive numbers anywhere in the world. In the near or even the distant future, that underlying reality is unlikely to change.



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# The Secret Life of Alfred Kinsey

*Joseph Epstein*

FAME, LIKE sex, is all too brief—a proposition I recently kitchen-tested by asking a classroom of 25 intelligent undergraduates if they had ever heard the name of Alfred C. Kinsey. Only one had, and he was not exactly sure what it stood for. What it stood for, of course, was sex, neither pure nor simple.

Nearly 50 years ago, Kinsey's name was both a red and a white flag, a household word, an attention-getting device. With the publication in 1948 of *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, a book brought out by a scientific publisher that sold an astonishing 200,000 copies in hardcover in its first two months in print, Kinsey was declared (depending upon one's point of view) a hero of the modern day or the greatest underminer of traditional morality the world had ever known. His name was everywhere, from popular songs to church sermons, from limericks to newspaper editorials. He was on the cover of *Time*, profiled in *Life*, the subject of *New Yorker* cartoons. By his admirers his book was thought to be in the same class as *Principia Mathematica*, *The Wealth of Nations*, or *Das Kapital*; its author was often compared to Galileo, Copernicus, and Freud, scientists who similarly had struggled against an obtuse and belligerent public to bring the truth to light.

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The particular truth brought to light by Kinsey's book had to do with the wide discrepancy between official—which is to say, standard, middle-class—accounts of sexual behavior and what was actually going on in the sexual lives of American men. Resting his conclusions on a vast number of interviews, Kinsey was able to show that 90 percent of American men masturbated, 85 percent had had premarital intercourse, between 35 and 45 percent had had extramarital intercourse, 59 percent had engaged in mouth-genital contact, roughly 70 percent had had dealings with prostitutes, 37 percent had had at least a single homosexual encounter that ended in orgasm, and no fewer than 17 percent of farm boys had experienced bestiality.

Or so the "Kinsey Report," as Kinsey's book came to be called, reported—scientifically.

"THERE ARE a good many fields of investigation, particularly in the social sciences, where in fact if you say anything at all it will not be scientifically justified," Chester I. Barnard, president of the Rockefeller Foundation, wrote in 1951. "And yet in all the affairs of life this kind of investigation seems to be necessary, and I don't think it can be avoided." The subject of Barnard's comment was Alfred Kinsey's work at the Institute for Sex Research at the University of Indiana, which the foundation had been indirectly supporting for many years. Given its potential for controversy, the Kinsey connection was quite worrisome, all the



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more so because Kinsey, a brilliant man at public relations, had cunningly attached the prestige of the foundation to his own work.

Barnard was on to something, but, truth to tell—and now all of it has been told, in detail, in a massive biography of Kinsey by James T. Jones*—he was not aware of a tenth of it. Jones's biography may not be, in a cant phrase of our day, a page-turner, but it certainly is, in the cant phrase of another day, an eye-opener. His lengthy portrait of Kinsey, marked by its own deep earnestness, reveals a man whom perhaps only his family and a few friends and assistants really knew.

"The man I came to know," Jones writes in his preface, "bore no resemblance to the canonical Kinsey." Instead of a cool scientist, Jones discovered a man of missionary zeal, "a crypto-reformer who spent his every waking hour attempting to change the sexual mores . . . of the United States" and who was perfectly willing to bend the canons of science to that purpose. More: while traveling under the flag of a disinterested researcher, Kinsey himself led a secret life as a voyeur, an exhibitionist, a homosexual, and a masochist. "I do not have the impression," wrote Alan Gregg, head of the Rockefeller Foundation's medical division, "that Kinsey or any of his associates have any morbid or pathological preoccupation with any particular aspect of sex." Dr. Gregg could not have been more wrong. In Jones's succinct words, "The beauty of sex research [was] that it allowed Kinsey to transform his voyeurism into science."

Social science is vulnerable to an examination of the lives of its investigators in a way that pure science is not. Newton's religiosity in no way invalidates the theory of gravity, nor does Einstein's rather soft liberalism vitiate the theory of relativity. But in the social sciences, "every idea," as Nietzsche somewhere says, "has its autobiography," and that autobiography can sometimes disqualify the ideas themselves. Although today Kinsey's predilections might help get a man a tenure-track job at an Ivy League university, in the 1940's and early 1950's, the years of his connection with Rockefeller, open knowledge of them would have been sufficient to detonate the Institute for Sex Research, the University of Indiana, and the Rockefeller Foundation in one compact hydrogen bomb of scandal.

ALFRED KINSEY was a man of more than ordinary contradictions. What we would nowadays call a "control freak," he had a strong need to oversee every aspect of his life and work and to dominate everyone around him. Yet he also took insane personal and professional chances in life, and his daily existence was marked as much by compulsion as by rationality. He voted Republican, yet was contemptuous of the middle class; he was in many ways conventional, yet also a genuine revolutionary, a moralist who in all matters relating to sex was very close to amoral; he was a devoted husband and father of three whose own deepest sensual pleasures were homosexual.

Where all this came from is the subject of James Jones's book. We learn from him that even as a child—he was born in 1894—Kinsey despised his father, a pompous, selfish, puritanical man who held a subsidiary teaching job at the Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, New Jersey. His mother tended to be of no help: a submissive woman who was overprotective of Alfred and her younger son and daughter, she served mainly to reinforce her husband's many little tyrannies. The Kinsey family was religious (Methodist), struggled to appear middle-class, and was apparently quite without joy. In later life, though Kinsey kept up some small contact with the other members of his family, he would refuse to see his father.

When Alfred was ten, the family moved to South Orange, a prosperous bedroom suburb of Newark and New York. There, according to Jones, Kinsey caught fire; making "the schoolroom his arena of achievement," he graduated as high-school valedictorian, while also becoming interested in classical music and scouting. No athlete, he was by temperament a collector: of stamps, butterflies, bugs. As for sex, his father held him in close rein; Alfred was not allowed to go to movies or dances, and he had no real contact with girls outside the classroom.

Masturbation was said in those days and in those quarters to cause everything from madness to blindness to the mysterious growth of hair. Kinsey's biographer tells us that he went in for it in a prodigious, and exceptionally guilty, way. Given who his father was, his religious upbringing, and his habit of self-criticism, Kinsey, Jones speculates, must have felt the guilt much more acutely than most boys—so much so that to the practice of solitary sexual release he came to add a rather complex form of masochism, one expression of which was his habit of inserting objects in his urethra while masturbating. "In secret," Jones writes, "Kinsey found pleasure through pain."

After high school, Kinsey made it known that he

* Norton, 937 pp., $39.95.



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wished to study biology, but his father insisted on a more strictly vocational training in mechanical engineering. After two mediocre years at Stevens, and very much against the wishes of his father—who later disowned him—Kinsey transferred to Bowdoin College in Maine. There he became a fraternity man and a leading figure in the debating club, and changed his religion from Methodist to Congregationalist. But his real conversion was to the divinity of science. As a son of the Progressive era, Kinsey, Jones writes, came to believe there were endless possibilities for improving the lot of men and women. Politics and religion were one means to this end; science, in his view, was another and much more efficient one.

Kinsey did his graduate work at Harvard, then a center for the "new biology," which aimed at rivaling the physical sciences in their power of formulating laws. He decided to specialize in taxonomy—a decision, Jones says, that "shaped his professional career"—and fell under the sway of one William Morton Wheeler, a high-rolling scientific operator in whom he also found a surrogate father. It was Wheeler who confirmed him in his ardor for the scientific method, helped land him an important post-doctoral traveling fellowship, and, subsequently, obtained a job for him in the department of zoology at Indiana University.

When Kinsey took up his job in Bloomington in 1920, he was twenty-six and still a virgin. There he met his future wife, Clara, an undergraduate chemistry major, and within two months he proposed. Jones reports that the Kinseys were unable to consummate their marriage on their honeymoon and for some while thereafter, owing to a physiological jigeroo in Clara that was later surgically corrected. In the end they would have four children, one of whom died before the age of four, and they seem to have had a genuine love for each other, if, to put it most gently, a less than ordinary sex life. Clara was herself quite a piece of work.

Prurience time: Kinsey, his biographer informs us, would in later years come to think of his Institute as a sexual utopia of sorts, in which no one would be "bound by arbitrary and antiquated sexual taboos," and he often used the attic of his home to stage little illustrative tableaux. The novelist Glenway Wescott, who used to visit the Kinseys in Bloomington, once confided to Kinsey that his own orgasms were so intense as to cause his body to jackknife at the moment of climax. Kinsey asked permission to film this event, and Wescott readily agreed, running a course on camera with his lover, Monroe Wheeler (director of publications and exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art in New York). After the jackknife had been duly captured on film, "Clara popped into the room with a tray of refreshments, along with clean towels so they could freshen up." Paul Gebhard, Kinsey's successor at the Institute, reported that at the conclusion of still other filming sessions, Clara, the perfect hostess, "would suddenly appear, literally with persimmon pudding or milk and cookies or something." Has social science ever seemed so, well, social?

IN HIS early days at Indiana University, Kinsey was considered a good but not a popular teacher. He was strongly opinionated, not particularly collegial, impatient with dull students. Like all monomaniacs, he was essentially humorless. He took his greatest pleasure in scholarship, which in his case meant studies of the gall wasp, the subject of his award-winning dissertation at Harvard. He was relentless in his pursuit of these insects, for through them he hoped to transform taxonomy, as Jones puts it, "from a descriptive discipline into a science with a strong explanatory power." This, of course, would later become his mission with regard to human sexuality.

Having shed religion, Kinsey by now had also shed conventional views about sex and marriage. He encouraged nudism on field trips with young male graduate students, and later sent pornography to them. Like anyone beyond a certain age who is preoccupied with sex, he became a creep; the wife of one former student described him as "a dirty old man." Kinsey, Jones writes, "could be manipulative and aggressive, a man who abused his professional authority and betrayed his trust as a teacher." He also ran a serious risk of exposure, which could have put paid to his career.

Kinsey's interest in teaching revived when, in 1938, he organized and began to provide the pivotal lectures in a course on marriage and the family. He had been reading the sexologists of the day—Havelock Ellis, Richard von Krafft-Ebing, and the rest—and was singularly unimpressed. "You know," he told a colleague, "there isn't much science here." If the sexologists disappointed, neither did he put any trust in physicians, and he certainly had little use for Freud or psychiatry, whose mission he took to be the reinforcement of the social and sexual status quo. Besides, by now Kinsey had developed his own ideas about sex. He had come to believe that Christianity, with its denial of sexual naturalness, was responsible for "the breakdown of the modern family," and he thought "the great distortions" of the day were "the cultural



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perversions of celibacy, delayed marriage, and asceticism."

Clearly, Kinsey had found his true subject—in fact, his life's work. Through his teaching and research on human sexuality, he could simultaneously do science, proselytize, and, with luck, bring comfort to people like himself who had suffered under the old regime of sexual reticence and repression. In connection with his course, Kinsey began to counsel students, and from these sessions to amass data on their sexual lives. He found he had an extraordinary knack for eliciting secret information, and soon was asking everyone who took his marriage-and-family course, and eventually others in the university as well, to fill in a lengthy sexual questionnaire. Most—in the name of science—agreed.

In his earliest researches Kinsey did not set out to interview homosexuals as homosexuals, but by the summer of 1939, when he took himself on a field trip to Chicago, he was telling the men he interviewed in the city's gay subculture that he was out to change social attitudes. He developed a taste for men on the margins of society, conducting interviews with male prostitutes, prisoners, and other odd and sometimes unsavory characters. He frequently corresponded with the men whose sexual histories he had recorded, letting them know that, though much of society might view them as deviant, he certainly did not. "Indeed," writes Jones, "anyone who did not know better would have thought Kinsey was socializing, not researching."

"In truth," Jones immediately adds, "Kinsey was socializing." He was also cruising. He spent a lot of time in gay bars in Chicago, where his assignations tended to be of the quick-hit variety. Closer to home, one of the first young men he hired full-time was a student named Clyde Martin, with whom he was in love. Even as he was pursuing Martin, he asked the young man to attend to Clara Kinsey's sexual needs, which Martin obligingly did. (He was not Clara's only extramarital lover.) Here again Kinsey was taking a big chance; in later years, aware of the importance of appearances, he would become more cautious, hiring as interviewers only married men with children, and eschewing anyone whose wife might have a drinking problem or who had an interest in left-wing causes.

For a long while, Kinsey financed much of his sex research out of his own pocket. But once his Institute was in place, and his Rockefeller connection established, he went to work in full earnest. He began to collect every kind of pornography he could find, depositing it in the Institute library. Booksellers began to put aside erotica for him; others sent things in the mail, which caused problems with U.S. Customs and the post office. And he became increasingly attracted to men with wild or twisted sex lives: masochists, sadists, pedophiles, sexual overachievers of any stripe. Normality, in regard to sex, was not a notion Kinsey recognized.

Prurience time again: one of Kinsey's discoveries was a sixty-three-year-old man whose history it took seventeen hours to record and who was a full-time, polymorphously-perverse sex machine. "Mr. X" had had sex from the earliest possible age, and had kept files on his vast exploits. Among his claims was that from, so to speak, a dead start he could achieve ejaculation in ten seconds, and he proved this before Kinsey and his assistant, Wardell Pomeroy. So riveted was Kinsey by this man that he used his experiences in a chapter in *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* on "Early Sexual Growth and Activity," conveniently overlooking the fact that Mr. X was also a predatory pedophile who, to quote Jones, "masturbated infants, penetrated children, and performed a variety of other sexual acts on pre-adolescent boys and girls alike." But then, as Jones also remarks, Kinsey, "in his eagerness to combat prudery and to celebrate Eros," was finding it "increasingly difficult to maintain moral boundaries."

WHEN FAME came in 1948 with the appearance of *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, it was in part the result of careful orchestration. Kinsey put all his controlling impulses to work on the book's publication. He invited journalists to Bloomington for special briefings, and wherever possible lined up friendly reviews in both the scientific and the popular press. The book swept all boards, intellectually, socially, commercially. It was written and talked about—and purchased—at a rate akin to *Gone With the Wind*. And its effect was electric. Thanks to Kinsey, as the *New Yorker* writer Janet Flanner would put it some years later, "that powerful little crotched corner of the body, which religion, the Christian religion at least, had so long tried to keep covered up and quieted down, has suddenly swollen to a clitoris or penis the size of a mountain from whose height the view is extended all over the Western world."

Still, international celebrity though he was, Kinsey could not control everything, and attacks, too, came rolling in. His use of statistics fell under fire; so did his sampling and interviewing techniques. He was accused of being a crude empiricist, a blatant behaviorist, a coarse scientific reductionist.



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Critics claimed he was ignorant of the complexities of culture, or that in neglecting the crucial element of love he had disqualified himself from speaking about sex. Finally he was assailed, in his biographer's summing-up, as "a crypto-reformer who promoted permissiveness under the guise of science."

These criticisms—by psychiatrists, anthropologists (Margaret Mead remarked that Kinsey's book "suggests no way of choosing between a woman and a sheep"), literary critics (notably Lionel Trilling), and theologians (Reinhold Niebuhr attacked him twice)—did not shake Kinsey. But they did shake the officers and trustees of the Rockefeller Foundation, who took steps to withdraw their support from Kinsey's Institute for Sex Research. This got to him, and he never quite regained his confidence. His second book, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953), made nothing like the splash of his first, nor did it sell nearly so well. He was beset with financial worries, and those close to him said he was on the edge of a nervous breakdown. He died in 1956, at the age of sixty-two, believing himself a martyr to science.

"WE WILL prove to these social scientists," Kinsey told a colleague early in his researches, "that a biological background can help in interpreting social phenomena." As a number of critics pointed out at the time, and as James T. Jones's biography now makes definitively clear, Kinsey's "interpretations" rested less on the findings of biology, or on science of any kind, than on his own social-sexual agenda. Rather than following where scientific methodology led, he simply reversed the process. He set out to prove, for example, that homosexuality was a good deal more common than anyone thought. Havelock Ellis had already declared that homosexuality was not a pathology but a statistical abnormality. Kinsey now undertook to show that it was not even a statistical abnormality. This he did by gathering a radically skewed sample, from which he then proceeded to extrapolate wildly and "interpret" freely.

As one who "loathed Victorian morality," Jones writes, Kinsey was "determined to use science to strip human sexuality of its guilt and repression." But even this was not enough. His real aim, according to his biographer, was to smash all accepted definitions of "normal" and "abnormal" in matters sexual, and thus to clear the field for a new dispensation. Jones is very frank about the nature of this new "moral calculus." As, in Kinsey's view, men were inherently more interested in sex than were women, and, among men, none seemed so interested as homosexuals, he came to believe that the key to sexual utopia lay in the "homoerotic model."

Alfred Kinsey was a moral revolutionary in scientist's clothing. The science was bad, even bogus; the man himself may now be forgotten; but the revolution came to stay, with a vengeance. Kinsey's message—fornicate early, fornicate often, fornicate in every possible way—became the mantra of a sex-ridden age, our age, now desperate for a reformation of its own.

At one point in this biography, Jones relates how Kinsey, in a black mood because the Rockefeller Foundation might not renew his grant, tied a rope around his scrotum, flipped the rope over a pipe, climbed onto a chair with the loose end in his hand, and jumped off, suspending himself in midair, no one knows for how long. There, hoist by Kinsey's petard, hang we all still.



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# The Brawl

## *A Story*

David Gelernter

"WHAT a pig, what a, I mean, *what a pig, what a*"—*smack*, Libbie claps down the phone and it gives off a jingly metallic recoil. She can't stomach any more of Jackie's berating Steven, not just now, though Jackie is right to be yelling at her because Libbie is guilty and knows it, guilty of bringing Jackie and Steven together for a meeting, of throwing (in effect) a plugged-in toaster into the bathtub with, of course, the best of intentions. The meeting got under way an hour and a half ago, lasted (oh, maybe) four minutes and left Jackie writhing like a whip and Steven suicidal: good job, moron. Wretched rash intruding fool. But she *had* to do it because Jackie is about to humiliate herself and her whole family by announcing her engagement not merely to a non-Jew but to a big chuckling German.

It's 1978—Jews are intermarrying like crazy. Jackie is Libbie's cousin and best friend and Libbie's pain is acute because it is the pain of failure. Years of companionship that made no difference. Jackie's parents are crushed, but as usual have no plans to do anything—God forbid they should *act*—so Libbie has to step in, although she doesn't get why Jackie is doing this. Jackie's parents have asked her repeatedly, but she can't explain. Striking back at her parents for giving her everything? Hitting Libbie for being less glamorous and having a tenth as many boyfriends? There must be a plan here, some kind of message, but Libbie can't read it. A million men to choose from, plenty of presentable Jewish ones, and there is nothing special about Klaus except that he is German and therefore lethal.

She dials Steven again. Busy again. She's got to talk to Steven. The meeting lasted five minutes, not even. She frets at the center of her web, forgotten Kleenex crumpled in her right hand: Jackie at the far end of one strand, Steven another, and now they hate each other and hate her, but she *had to* try something. So she summoned Steven to rescue Jackie. Steven, whose brilliance pins you like a prison searchlight, slight, neat, modestly handsome, with transparent skin showing stubble, with tumultuous eager eyes. Steven who hates the whole idea of Jackie, being (after all) a young Orthodox rabbi—although as a teenager he slept with her. She seduced him. Or maybe she didn't. Libbie can't say, they won't tell her, but *it doesn't matter*, Jackie has a thing for Steven; respects him, perversely admires him. And Steven felt something for Jackie. He denies it but that proves nothing, he *would*. Cold vibrant Jackie, sizzling like disintegrating ice cubes, the gorgeous demure eyes, the little-girl bangs, the sculpted hollows of the cheeks where darkness pools (she's too thin, you could even say

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gaunt), the short black hair prickling with light, the high-watt flirting. Jackie and Steven—toaster plus bathtub. She must speak to Steven, who now hates her.

She sweeps her left arm over her hair back to front and clamps down. The hair falls forward, curtaining off her face. She crosses her bare legs and hooks one ankle behind the other and pulls tight as if she is ratcheting a slip knot. She dials Steven again and it's busy again and she hangs up again. A minute later, her father's voice behind the closed door: "Yes? Dad?" (She's between apartments, living guilty and safe with her parents, sitting on her childhood bed, pale yellow light of the bedside lamp with the flowered wallpaper pressing in on her, 2,000 dusk-pink smudges listening intently.) She notices the Kleenex in her hand and flings it at the corner wastebasket.

"It's Steven Eskanazzi on the other line. Shall I tell him you're busy?"

"No!—I'm coming. I'll pick up in the other room."

Pulling off her blouse, getting into a bathrobe, rushing down the hall to her father's study, where a phone is connected to both lines. On the bed in her old room she had been beautiful (the thought was running through her mind), in her bare legs and flipped-over hair and desperation, but as usual at her best moments there was no one to see her. Does Steven in the Orthodox purity of his mind undress girls with his eyes the way normal men do? Either possibility seems untenable. She whacks the light switch on, closes the door, sits at the desk. Cold fluorescent light, humming.

Steven thought the whole plan idiotic, thought Jackie beyond saving, but agreed for Libbie's sake. (Her heart bumping as she contemplates the telephone and its lit-up button.) Agreed to sit down with Libbie and Jackie and Klaus—Jackie had refused to come without Klaus—to sit down at a restaurant and talk. Libbie figured he would ignore Klaus. That he would bear down on Jackie. Jackie would be shaken. Jackie would want to see Steven again. It didn't work. She punches (hand trembling) the button for Steven's line (a round satisfying clunk) and picks up: "Steven?"

"Libbie? I called to apologize." Pause. Breathless silence. Her mental clock stops, waiting. "Look. I don't know what to say, except I'm a total screw-up. Total screw-up. I let you down, I'm sorry, I'm very sorry." Even when his voice is lifeless and one inch from muttering, the words come fast. "I don't know what to say." Flooding her with warmth to the point of dizziness. "Lord in heaven," he says. "I never knew shame was so painful. Anyone there? Am I talking to a wall?—it figures."

"I'm here," she says, "I'm here. You have no cause to be ashamed," softly, "no cause. No cause. You were fine, fine, it's all right, you were fine."

In seventeen years she has never once heard his voice like this, the shuddering roughness—scraping bottom. "You were wonderful," she says, "you were very wonderful."

Comes in a flash the memory of a basement scene, the two of them eleven years old maybe or twelve, with a bunch of other kids and a ping-pong table—why and where, she can't say, they went to different schools in the same neighborhood. In his jeans and high-tops and knitted *yarmulke* he is the smartest, most abrasive, most obnoxiously boyish of boys (pumping spitballs through the barrel of a nineteen-cent Bic ballpoint, snowballing girls). And another boy shouts at him across the basement, *because you hurt his feelings, jerk.* A child's officious singsong. And Steven's face as he grasps suddenly, out of the blue, that he has hurt someone—seriously hurt, that seems to be the implication. And Steven sinking (with a look so odd he might have been sick) to the rough bench next to the table, saying nothing, she too scared of him to consider approaching but her eleven-year-old heart going out to him.

She can't remember whose feelings got hurt or how, or who leveled the accusation. But the pocking balls, the sandpaper paddles, the darting shadows, the stricken look on his face are all fresh.

"I made a fool of myself."

"You didn't," she says. "No."

"What she said in the parking lot must be right I guess. I'm a pig, okay? I'm a pig. Course I have to believe she's one too. She could turn anyone into an infant. In my case, not that it takes much. We're two of a kind, and there's poor you—right in the middle of the pigyard, listening to the oinks. Or whatever pigs do. Oink, right? I'm terribly sorry, what I put you through. I'm terribly, really terrifically sorry. I'm a pain in the butt. I'm sorry."

She has waited a lifetime for this conversation. For the chance to comfort Steven—so brilliantly commanding, so walled-off inside Orthodoxy. Forget Jackie, the hell with Jackie. Jackie will marry Klaus. Jackie and Klaus will be a stab of pain forever. And their children—pain and humiliation multiplying in a tired world. A steel knife in your back, reproducing itself. But on the other hand, there's Steven: she has so much love and reassurance welling up it could drown him. She needs to play it



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out gradually. "It's okay. You were fine. It's okay." The tear breaks and runs down her cheek. But she no longer knows precisely why she is crying. Shaking her head, "You were fine. I should never have done this to you. You ought to be mad at me. At me." The tears getting hold of her.

"Don't cry. C'mon. Don't."

"Don't mind me"—bitter at herself and her gross emotions. "I'm just a hysterical nitwit. Ignore me."

He sighs. "Some honey of a day."

IT TURNED decisively bad for Steven by mid-afternoon, this particular Thursday the thirteenth of April 1978. He can't concentrate and he needs to: he's supposed to give a talk in synagogue this Saturday. He has a Hebrew book open on the table in a corner, and next to it a spiral notebook and a yellow pad and a book in French about Celtic art. People have been calling all day to ask whether it's true that Rabbi Eskanazzi will be speaking. "Yeah, it's true," he says to one of them, "and if everyone would stop phoning me, I'd just maybe *conceivably* have time to figure out what to say. Yes. Sure. Yes. Upstairs. Sure. *Zay gezunt.*" Smacks the phone down.

By mid-afternoon the phone and his nerves have brought progress to a halt. He writes a few lines, awkward stand-up handwriting, paces to the futon and sits; scoops up mail from a laundry basket, sorts through a few envelopes, ripping unopened junk mail in half; goes to the window to look out at West End Avenue. He and Rafi had jointly leased the apartment, but then he left the country—and continued to send Rafi checks for his share of rent, though Rafi refused to cash them. So he feels half at home and half like a guest.

It's a big tall white-walled underfurnished room with a bristling radiator like an armed guard by the window. He is delighted when Rafi walks in. "Finally," he says. "*Sholem aleichem.* I'm going crazy. How could I possibly have agreed to do this? Am I totally warped in the head?"

"What're we talking about?" Heading into the bedroom. "The *shabbes* talk or Libbie's cousin? The cousin, right?" Getting out of his jacket and tie. "Yes, I think it probably means you *are* warped in the head." Eventually Rafi settles with a newspaper in the living room ("Vance Off to Africa and Soviet," "HEW Orders Steps to Control Rise in Medical Costs"). He is tall and (folded-up with his knees too high) looks awkward on the low-to-the-floor futon. Fleecy brown hair with an orange *yarmulke* pinned in the center. His long triangle face is a smiling ice-cream cone. "Actually I'm very impressed," he says, "that you'd do something like this. Undertaking to rescue this girl from the Hun. It sounds like, y'know, futile, but. . . ." Elaborate paper-cracklings as he turns a page ("Carter Takes Stroll Among Cherry Trees, Accompanied by Wife Rosalynn and Daughter Amy"). "Sit down, why don't you."

Steven is pacing. "No compromise on *pikuah nefesh!*" To save a life is a crucial religious obligation. "I've never seen Libbie so devastated."

"She's a nice girl."

"Sweet, yeah. She takes things too hard. This cousin's main joy in life is torturing her. Someone ought to wring her neck."

"Sit *down*, you're making me nervous."

He stops still, gazing at a pile of newspapers and magazines on the floor. With a swoop he grabs a *Playboy* from near the bottom. "Ha! Now I know what Rabbi Melman has been doing with himself in my absence. I leave the country, *boom*, the latest issue of *Naked Shiksas* materializes instantaneously." Flipping through it—"naked Jewish girls aren't good enough for him. Not Rabbi Melman." Rafi grinning, embarrassed, jumps up and grabs it. Steven grabs it back and walks off toward the kitchen. Then he turns and flips it to Rafi who snags it with a lunge. "Take it, take it. 'If not for the evil urge'"—rattling off in Hebrew a quotation from the Midrash—"'no one would build a house, marry, have children, do business.' I should worry. Did I ever tell you," shouting from the kitchen, "that Mister Coffee is the stupidest name for an appliance I ever heard?" ("Eskanazzi talks so fast," a teacher once said, "it's like he's talking French.")

"Only ten or twenty times."

"I'm out of the country five months and everything, everything goes to hell and they don't even know how to make coffee any more. A plastic box with holes. Is it okay if I get a soda out of Mister Refrigerator?"

"Why are you making such a production? Calm down. You're acting like a high-school boy with a big date."

"What's all this stuff, all these newspapers on Mister Floor? Any more issues of *Naked Shiksas*?"

"I bought *one* magazine, sue me."

In Hebrew Steven says, "I don't say one word." The phone on the kitchen wall rings. "Not I am saying one word." He picks up. The female voice is surprised to hear his hello. "Is Mister—Rabbi—Melman there?" it asks tentatively.

"Yeah." Steven shouts into the living room: "It's for you! It's a girl!"



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"Please, a little louder? I'm coming."

"He's coming," says Steven into the phone. "Miss? You are a girl, right?" The female voice doesn't know what to say. "It's Miss July!" Steven shouts. "She—" Rafi strides in and grabs the phone. "She wants to talk to Mister Coffee."

Around eight that evening Libbie pulls up in her Dodge Dart at curbside near the subway station at 188th Street in Queens. Steven is at the corner, hands in pockets, staring at the sidewalk ten feet ahead of him, conspicuous by virtue of being motionless. She leans over and pushes open the passenger door—"Steve! Steven!"—but on an inspiration shuts off the engine, slips her key out and dangles it. "Want to drive?"

He does. They head for Nassau County and a restaurant called the Afterglow. She is so tactful and kind, people don't notice her; she is beginning to admire this about herself from afar, as if she were a gallant ship going down. She takes pains to spare other people's feelings but no one (except her father) takes any pains to spare hers.

A few weeks before he left for Israel she had praised to Steven with eager innocence her new discovery, Simone Weil, a self-sacrificing heroine and martyr in whom she could see, maybe, a little bit of herself. Whereupon he had screamed at her and hurt her feelings—but the sharpness of his denunciation made an impression. "Simone Weil, *right*, the professional saint, who loves *people* so much she could *plotz* but hates every *person* in particular except for a handful of *goyish* intellectuals, hates her own family, hates Jews on principle, hates her own pathetic self."

Simone Weil wasn't fit to tie your shoes, he told her later. "You're a strong girl, self-respecting girl, self-respecting *Jewish* girl, beautiful girl, fighter girl, soldier-of-truth girl." Making a muscle: "*Eishes hayil!*" Soldier Woman!—key phrase of the biblical poem with which Orthodox men serenade their wives on Sabbath eve, praising their moral heroism. They were walking down a quiet suburban sidewalk at dusk.

"No I'm not."

"Not what?—not *any* of it? I got every single one wrong?"

She stuck her tongue out at him. (She was still half-angry because he had yelled at her.) Whereupon she became aware that he had a powerful urge to bop her on the bottom—she read the whole plot in his face. And felt a neutral anticipatory prickling where the smack would land. But of course he didn't do it. He turned from her, brimful of his raucous little-boy smile, and let the crest break while he looked away, and then turned back and barked out, "We don't need no Simone Weiyul! This lady is an *eishes hai-yul!*" So she had to smile. And she has felt guilty ever since for admiring the sweet suffering face of Simone Weil, but admires it anyway.

"This Klaus," she tells him. . . .

"Time for my mission briefing?"

She smiles at him, nervous. "Klaus Hemdorf, or something like that, was sent over here by his father to get a chemical-engineering degree, which he did, a Master's, at Columbia, and then he was supposed to stay in Manhattan for a year and work, but he decided partway through that he wanted to be a photographer, and hooked up somehow with a group who have a studio in the Village, and he's learning the trade, but I gather in a very. . . ." Tails off. "His folks are rich. You're all keyed-up, aren't you?"

He shrugs. Then says, "Yes." And adds, "Your engine's kind of noisy."

She tells him more about Klaus and Jackie, and he is listening and taking it in but disengaged, his mind three-quarters elsewhere. She knows the mood. The words you speak to him are admitted to the waiting room and a secretary takes them down but the mind of Steven Eskanazzi is in conference in the back room, and when you talk to him you get an unsynchronized feeling, an automatic transmission that shifts at not quite the right points. They are slipping out of Queens into Nassau County down an arcade of jungle colors—lit-up signs and storefronts along Route 25. The unseasonably warm darkness feels transparent.

He says nothing. She says nothing. She pictures them gliding through silver water leaving a lapping ripple of disturbed color to spread out silently behind them, gorgeous Hess green and McDonald's yellow and Dunkin' Donuts orange and the aqua and pink of the Jericho Pet Emporium. "Brakes pull to the left," he says. "A little. No big deal." And is silent again, and his face (lit in flashes by opposing headlights) is frowning and you can see it thinking. Libbie is a plain ordinary Jew and not Orthodox, and he therefore wouldn't marry her in a million years, and he *therefore* hardly sees her as a woman at all; nonetheless, he's her faithful friend.

She points out the place and they pull into the parking lot. They walk to the sunken front door, down a half-flight of concrete stairs. The Afterglow occupies several rooms in a semi-basement.



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Noisy chatter hits them, and the smell of beer, and heavy electric-guitar chords from the next room. In the coppery orange light they sit on adjacent sides of a square table. Pipes snake over the ceiling. They wait for Jackie and Klaus. Steven is rigidly still. Libbie looks (quick nervous glances) at Steven, then the door, then Steven. The air is full of cigarette smoke and smell.

Jackie walks up behind and taps Steven on the shoulder and he jumps, looks behind, but she's slipped around in front. He rises in slow motion, frowning at her intently, then swivels to take in Klaus. "*Hell*-o," Jackie says in her bright-shiniest voice, her arm twined around the arm of the large man beside her; she leans her head on him, rubs her black hair up and down like a cat at a scratching post. "This is my Klaus." "Hello," says Klaus. "Pleased to meet you," to Libbie. "Pleased to meet you, Rabbi," to Steven.

She's wearing tight jeans and a red sash instead of a belt, and a plain white blouse. Klaus with a handsome flat face and chin wide, skin pink, unfashionably slick shortish neatly-combed hair and graceful movements. Steven shakes his hand without a word, his eyes lock on Jackie; and then without a word he looks past her and they all sit down, Klaus opposite and Jackie on his right. He hasn't seen Jackie for several years. Had forgotten the screaming laughter in her Roman-candle eyes.

Libbie says something vaguely friendly to Klaus. "In American places," he answers, "ze moozic, ze rock moozic, you hear constantly. It's an absolutely remarkable thing." Vowels like long dark tunnels. For a moment his smile is overeager. A diagnosis of homosexuality crosses Steven's mind. Three heavy repeating guitar chords, VRUM-VRUM-VRUM. They feel the beat through the floor but the words are inaudible. "Ziss little girl, she really likes it, zough." Jackie smiles up at him, wiggles her face in time to the beat, VRUM-VRUM-VRUM, kisses him on the lips, looks at Steven.

"Stevie," she says, "how have you been? Don't glare at me, Stevie." Reaches a hand toward his face and he pulls away abruptly, a startled fish. She pouts, teasing. "Don't glare." Her little-girl voice. "Stevie's unhappy about something. . . . Lighten up, Stevie. Please? For me?" With painstaking Marilyn Monroe precision she pushes her lips into a kiss and blows it to him.

"So, Rabbi—how iss business?" Jackie cuddling against Klaus; he throws an arm around her shoulders and smiles fondly, proud owner, gratefully aware of the honor, savoring it, feeling (even) a little unworthy and defensive. Jackie reaches her face around and kisses him. VRUM-VRUM-VRUM. "I don't think we're going to see a waitress anytime soon," says Libbie.

"I don't know why Steven's always angry at the world," Jackie says sweetly. "Steven's always angry. He is *always* angry. Especially at me. And I don't know why. I'm crazy about *him*. I'm crazy about you, Stevie." The Roman candles mocking, flaring. "Teach me that in German. 'I don't know why. . .' Klausie is teaching me German." Prompting, with her lips inches from his—"I don't know why."

"*Ich weiss nicht warum*"—taking her neck in his big left hand and positioning her forehead where he can kiss it.

VRUM-VRUM-VRUM. "So an affectionate girl," Klaus says contentedly.

"What do you do, Klaus," Steven's voice, startling in its hardness—they all look at him—"What do you do for a living? When you're not fondling girls in public. Or is that the whole deal?"

Klaus snorts and looks at Libbie.

"Your friend," grinding the *r* like an engine starting, "he's not so polite, iss he?" A pause and then a big forgiving, open-mouthed laugh as Libbie looks at the table—"*Steven*"—a low pleading sound, while Klaus laughs. She advances her hand toward his but doesn't quite touch.

NINETY MINUTES later she is talking to him on the phone—after further taunts, and Klaus leaping to his feet (palms outward at shoulder level as if he were pushing a wall, disclaiming any intention to fight) and Steven leaping up too, in such a way as to shove the table into Klaus's thighs. The sounds keep replaying in her head, the shrieking rattle of the table hitching across the floor, the glassware sliding, a tumbling glass shattering as both girls scream, the thick dizzy buzz, Steven stumbling with his shirt tails hanging out and visible behind them the knotted fringes in white string of his *tallit katan*, Jackie shrieking in the parking lot. Now she's talking to Steven with her eyes closed and taking deep, careful breaths to steady herself as she listens. It's going well, here in unknown territory, and everything will be okay if she just has the nerve to keep steady and just go forward and keep steady, keep calm, keep steady. "I disgraced myself," he is saying. Muttering. "I acted like a bully boy. Junior storm-trooper."

"You were provoked."

"No." He quotes in Hebrew a sentence from the Mishnah and then translates: "'In a place where there are no men, *you* strive to be a man.'" His voice breaking, a thing she has never heard before.



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"I'm like an old man, I never before understood the meaning of that sentence."

"No, you were fine, no, it's okay"—and then she conceives the stupid idea of transferring the conversation into her bedroom. "Stay put," she says, "I'm going to hang up and call you back in two seconds." She dashes down the hall and dials. But already his voice is different. The self-scorn is gone. The new sound is hard and dry. "I let her humiliate me, okay. I let her humiliate you. I shouldn't have. I let her humiliate Jewishness. I shouldn't have." The soft distinct syllables menacing. "I have to go see her again. She lives in the West 60's, right? I'll do something after *shabbes*"—meaning the evening after next. The voice starting to convey that the man is standing, moving, maybe pacing.

"No, *no*." Catastrophe. "You can't, never, you *can't ever* see her again, don't you *see*"—though she herself just sees it now, right now—"that the whole *point* was to bait you, it's *her*, not him, the whole entire *game* was for you to go crazy. No, you can't *possibly* see her again—it's finished, good-bye, good riddance, you have to walk *away*."

"What *game*," bitterly—she hears the shoulders shifting, the rapid-fire bite coming back. "I'm not talking 'game,' I'm talking *Yiddishkeit*, there's an obligation here—a *strong*, strong obligation. For a Jewish woman to act like this," the restless, confined tones of angry pacing coming into play, "a *Jewish woman* to carry on in public with a German, like a, I don't have to tell you, you know *like what*, this is disgusting, a profanation, a *hillul ha'Shem*, and I have a *strong*, strong obligation to tell her straight out that she is disgracing the Jewish people, someone has to tell her, I have to tell her, I'm elected, I have to do it. I will do it."

Libbie teaches Hebrew at a liberal Jewish day school; knows enough to recognize that word, obligation, as a word too big to bulldoze, a spiritual boulder you would need dynamite even to budge, referring to the gravity that keeps the Orthodox world together, making it a forbidding strange place to the likes of her and making her world look to Steven like a zero-gravity circus (floating toothpaste tubes, parades on the ceiling) where, in the absence of moral gravity, up and down are polite conventions at first, then matters of opinion, then obsolete terms of art. But she can't let him do it.

"Don't you see," impatiently, "the whole *thing* was just to bait you, she's a scheming—a *scheming*, she's *playing* with you, don't you *see*?" She's standing now too. Sucking her lower lip.

"Oh *please*, she dug this guy up for *me*? *I'm* the reason she fell in love with a big leering German *sheygetz*?"

Pause of horror. Is it possible? Running it through her mind, "No, no, no—it's just—you *can't* see her again, the whole deal is to torment you as much as possible, to make you *care*, then walk away with Klaus, don't you *see*, it's so clear, that's the whole idea, the whole plan. It's *exactly* what she wants because she cares for you, I'm telling you, you don't understand, *she still cares for you*."

"Libbie. Please." The whole revelation, swiped away with one word.

"I'm just *so* sorry I ever dragged you into this, just *so* sorry—drop it, please *please*, I beg of you, drop it *please*." Her desperation, the hoarse syllables squeezed flat and gasping to get out, brings him up short. He's puzzled. By the end of the conversation she is pretty sure she's convinced him to drop it, has battered him into agreement. A delicately-balanced tower of blocks that will probably not collapse.

But she's uneasy.

TEN MINUTES later she dials him again and the phone is busy. Five minutes after that, Rafi picks up. "Libbie? He's gone out. Honestly, I'm not enthusiastic about this whole deal. I think you should lay off him, this business about your cousin. I've never seen this before, how he looked just now. He was like, wild. Jumping around. I tried to get him not to go. I don't like this."

"*Where is he going*?"

"Where do you *think*? To your cousin's. I shouldn't have let him."

Three raps on the closed door: "Libbie?" No earnest conversations with her father just now. Not possible. She cups a hand over the mouthpiece and screams in pantomime at the man beyond the door, mouthing the words, making not a sound, God in heaven, go away. Go away. *Go away!* Then she calls out, "I'm on the phone, Dad."

To Rafi in a near whisper she says, "Oh I see. Oh I see."

"He said to her, I'm gonna come over and we are gonna have a little talk."

"Oh my God. Oh I see. And what did she say?"

"*How should I know?* I gather she said okay."

"Oh I see."

Actually she had told him, "You know what they say: be careful what you wish for, bucko, cause what if you get it?" By now he has nearly covered the twenty blocks between his apartment and hers.



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MUSIC

# Does Bill Evans Swing?

*Terry Teachout*

NO JAZZ pianist of the postwar era is more widely admired than Bill Evans (1929-80). The cover of *Everybody Digs Bill Evans*, the 1958 album that first brought him to the attention of the general public, bore testimonials by Miles Davis ("He plays the piano the way it should be played"), George Shearing, Ahmad Jamal, and Cannonball Adderley. Younger jazz artists who readily admit to having been influenced by him comprise a long list that includes Chick Corea, Herbie Hancock, Keith Jarrett, Gary Burton, and Pat Metheny.

But if it is rare to find a musician who has anything unflattering to say about Evans, there have always been certain critics who disliked him. "The more I hear of Evans, the more I become convinced that the propagation of the Evans mystique must be one of the major con jobs of recent years," John S. Wilson wrote in 1965. More recently, Tom Piazza complained in *The Guide to Classic Recorded Jazz* (1995) that "I have trouble sitting still for [Evans's] work for very long. He doesn't swing enough, he can't play the blues, and I don't feel close to his soul."

Perhaps the most notorious example of Evans-bashing is reported by Eric Nisenson in his new book, *Blue: The Murder of Jazz.** According to Nisenson:

> I once overheard [the jazz critic] Stanley Crouch giving a diatribe against Evans. It was just before a kind of symposium of jazz critics. . . . Evans, according to Crouch, was a "punk" whose playing could scarcely be considered jazz. He could not swing, according to Crouch, and there was no blues in his playing.

Many of the early criticisms of Evans can be explained by his extreme originality. As a sideman with Miles Davis's group (1958-59), and then as leader of his own trios, Evans rewrote the language of modern jazz piano, incorporating harmonic devices derived from the music of the French impressionists and forging an ensemble style noted for its complex yet fluid rhythmic interplay. Such innovators typically meet with stubborn opposition from conservative critics, and Evans was no exception to the rule.

But now that Evans's music has become so familiar a part of the landscape, it is strange indeed to hear it attacked categorically as the work of a "punk" or (to use another of Stanley Crouch's epithets for Evans) a "jazz pretender." Wherever the key to this mystery is to be found, it is emphatically not in Bill Evans's playing.

EVANS'S FIRST solo album, *New Jazz Conceptions* (1956), showed him to be an adept imitator of Bud Powell—a contemporary of Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie who first translated the bebop idiom into pianistic terms—and of Horace Silver, a younger player whose "funky," blues-drenched playing was popular in the 50's.† Though *New Jazz Conceptions* was favorably reviewed in the jazz press, it sold only 800 copies in the year following its release, no

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* St. Martin's, 262 pp., $22.95.

† Virtually all of Bill Evans's recordings have been reissued on CD, both individually and in box sets. A cross-section is listed in the discography at the end of this article.



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doubt because Evans's playing was so obviously derivative.

Yet Evans was already in the process of forging the highly individual style heard on the recordings he made with Miles Davis and by himself in 1958 and 1959. His right-hand melodic lines soon grew longer and more supple, while his harmonic vocabulary, enriched by extensive familiarity with the piano music of Debussy, Ravel, and the Russian composer Alexander Scriabin, acquired a range of color and subtlety all but unprecedented in jazz.

With the release of *Everybody Digs Bill Evans*, it became clear that, though completely at ease with the brisk tempos of bebop, Evans was above all a lyricist who was at his most characteristic in such spare-textured yet emotionally intense ballad performances as "Young and Foolish" (from *Everybody Digs Bill Evans)* and "Blue in Green" (from Davis's *Kind of Blue*, 1959), in which his fresh chordal voicings and luminous, singing touch could be savored to the fullest. It was these performances that the normally acerbic Davis had in mind when, years later, he said admiringly: "Bill had this quiet fire that I loved on piano. The way he approached it, the sound he got was like crystal notes or sparkling water cascading down from some clear waterfall."

BUT EVANS was tragically uncomfortable with his own gifts. A slender, bespectacled introvert who played with his face held inches from the keyboard, he looked more like a college professor than a jazz pianist, and his shyness was exacerbated by the fact that he was the only white musician in Davis's sextet. Then as now, racial mixing was comparatively uncommon in working jazz groups, and some listeners regarded Evans (who had replaced the black pianist Red Garland) as an alien presence in the Davis band. As Davis would recall in his autobiography:

> Many blacks felt that since I had the top small group in jazz and was paying the most money that I should have a black piano player. . . . I know this stuff got up under Bill's skin and made him feel bad. Bill was a very sensitive person, and it didn't take much to set him off.

No less intimidating was the fact that the little-known Evans was appearing each night with a group that, to his mind, consisted of "superhumans." Miles Davis was then regarded as the leading jazz trumpeter, and his sidemen—the saxophonists John Coltrane and Cannonball Adderley, the bassist Paul Chambers, and the drummers Philly Joe Jones and Jimmy Cobb—were hardly less formidable. Evans's native self-consciousness grew even more pronounced in the presence of these colleagues, and he seems to have found it difficult to accept that he was increasingly regarded by listeners as their peer.

"If people wouldn't believe I was a bum," Evans later told a friend, "I was determined to prove it." He did so by becoming involved with narcotics. Coltrane, Chambers, and Jones were all heroin addicts, as Davis had been only a few years earlier, and at some point in the late 50's—perhaps in a desperate attempt to prove his authenticity as a jazz musician—Evans acquired the habit. Except for a brief period in the 70's, he used drugs (first heroin, then cocaine) for the rest of his life.

THOUGH EVANS'S addiction promptly cast him into the drug underworld, it had no immediate effect on his ability to make music or on his growing reputation as a major creative force in jazz. By the late 1950's he had left Davis's group and started his own trio, collaborating with the virtuoso bassist Scott LaFaro and the drummer Paul Motian to develop a new method of ensemble playing that would become almost as influential as his harmonic techniques.

Prior to 1959, bassists and drummers had played a straightforward and largely subordinate role in jazz rhythm sections, laying down a steady "walking" beat over which soloists improvised. Evans, by contrast, encouraged his sidemen to abandon the regular timekeeping patterns of bebop, preferring a conversational approach in which the underlying meter was not so much stated as implied. As he put it to an interviewer:

> If the bass player, for example, hears an idea that he wants to answer, why should he just keep playing a 4/4 background?. . . I don't really understand why the basic 4/4 meter has to be pounded out year after year when other things that are more subtle can be projected, as long as it is within you.

At first, many listeners found Evans's method of "simultaneous improvisation" to be disorienting, and their confusion became the source of the persistent canard that Evans "couldn't swing." In fact, he was, when he chose to be, one of the hardest-swinging players in jazz. But unlike the "hard boppers" of the 50's and 60's, who favored an aggressive, anti-lyrical idiom, Evans sought deliberately to widen the expressive spectrum, and his playing, though never sentimental, was often unabashedly romantic. "I believe all music is romantic," he told an interviewer, going on to say that "romanticism handled with discipline is the most *beautiful* kind of beauty."

Though Evans was devastated by the death in 1961 of LaFaro, his closest artistic partner, his own work remained at a consistently high level of inspiration well into the 60's. The albums he made during that period, especially *Sunday at the Village Vanguard* and *Waltz for Debby* (both recorded shortly before LaFaro's death) and *Conversations With Myself* (a 1963 solo album in which he used multitrack-tape technology to overdub two additional piano



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parts), are widely regarded as his best recorded performances.

But the debilitating effects of long-term drug addiction finally took their toll, and by the 70's the probing, introspective style of Evans's youth was hidden under a glassy shell of mannerism. Though he was still capable of giving first-rate performances and making memorable recordings (usually outside the context of his regular working trio), it seemed as though, in the words of the pianist Warren Bernhardt, "he was painting himself into some kind of corner. . . . He was rushing a lot and going through the motions."

Evans himself knew that something was missing. "There really wasn't a chance for the music to be alive and growing as much," he later said of this period. "I had arrived at a refinement of what we were doing, to the point where it wasn't as natural." But it was not until 1979 that he began a final period of renewal, joining forces with the bassist Marc Johnson and the drummer Joe LaBarbera, two younger musicians whose extroverted playing spurred him to new heights of creativity. A Village Vanguard engagement recorded in June 1980 reveals that he had completely shaken off his mid-70's lethargy, and was playing with the dynamism and imagination of a far younger man.

It was, alas, too late: Evans died just three months later, his body ravaged by two decades' worth of chemical self-abuse. "Maybe he found what he was looking for," said the pianist Oscar Peterson, one of his greatest admirers, on hearing the news.

IN THE wake of Evans's death, musicians and critics hastened to pay heartfelt tribute to his artistry, and to this day the prevailing view of his achievement remains overwhelmingly positive. Why, then, do some dissent so strongly?

Tom Piazza's two-pronged "critique" of Evans—that he "doesn't swing enough" and that he "can't play the blues"—is unconvincing on its face, the first point being untrue and the second irrelevant. Like many famous jazz musicians of the past, Evans was simply uninterested in the blues, both as a form and as part of his musical vocabulary. But at no time in the history of jazz has such a lack of interest been regarded by musicians as a disability. Such jazz icons as Coleman Hawkins, Earl Hines, and Art Tatum, for instance, devoted no more time or energy to playing the blues than did Evans.

Piazza's remarks about Evans are of interest solely because they are so blatantly derived from the race-conscious critical theories of the black novelist and literary scholar Albert Murray. As I have explained in detail before,* Murray and his acolyte Stanley Crouch believe, contrary to all historical evidence, that the ability to play the blues is the defining trait of "authentic" jazz musicians, and that white musicians cannot play the blues (save by imitating blacks). The self-evident purpose of this line of argument is to redefine jazz as an exclusively black idiom to which white musicians (including not only Evans but the cornetist Bix Beiderbecke and other noted players) have made only peripheral contributions. Hence Crouch's contemptuous description of Evans as a "punk."

The last word on this brand of pseudo-criticism has been pronounced by Eric Nisenson:

> Does Evans "sound white"? What if he does? He *is* white, after all, and if his music is authentic it has to be expressive of his own life and truth. The beauty and power and—yes—authenticity of Bill Evans's music is vouched for by the fact that some of the greatest African-American musicians of this century. . . respected him enough to have Evans play in their bands and/or record with him.

IN THE end, no amount of racial rhetoric can obscure the permanent value of Bill Evans's musical achievement. No pianist of the last 40 years contributed more to the jazz tradition, and none played more beautifully. Moreover, while the dissemination of Murray's and Crouch's line has already had unfortunate consequences—it will surely be a long time before Jazz at Lincoln Center, whose programs are vetted by Crouch, deigns to devote an evening to Evans's music—it has not affected the high regard in which Evans continues to be held by his peers or by the wider audience.

In 1984, a group of 47 distinguished jazz pianists, asked to name the "best" and "most influential" pianists of all time, ranked Evans second only to Art Tatum in both categories; when the members of the same group were asked to name a "personal favorite," Evans came in first. Today, Evans's records still sell in large quantities, and young pianists, black and white, continue to learn from his work. Long after the reverse-racist theories of his detractors have been relegated to the dustheap, his recordings will be delighting listeners yet unborn.

* "The Color of Jazz," COMMENTARY, September 1995.



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# Bill Evans on CD: A Select Discography

THREE DIGITALLY remastered box sets—*Bill Evans: The Complete Riverside Recordings* (Riverside RCD-018-2, twelve CD's), *The Complete Bill Evans on Verve* (Verve 314 527 953-2, eighteen CD's), and *Bill Evans: The Complete Fantasy Recordings* (Fantasy FCD-1012-2, nine CD's)—contain most of Evans's commercially recorded legacy. Like all such collections, these sets include much unreleased material and previously unissued alternate takes, the quality of which varies considerably. Those unfamiliar with Evans's work will be better served by listening to the individual CD's listed below.

**1958:** *Everybody Digs Bill Evans* (Riverside OJCCD-068-2). Accompanied by the bassist Sam Jones and Philly Joe Jones, Miles Davis's favorite drummer, Evans here emerges decisively as the most original piano stylist of his generation.

**1959:** Miles Davis, *Kind of Blue* (Columbia CK 64935). In this album, by far the most influential of the postwar era, Evans (who alternates with pianist Wynton Kelly) is prominently featured in his own composition, "Blue in Green."

**1961:** *The Bill Evans Trio at the Village Vanguard* (Riverside FCD-60-017). Evans, Scott LaFaro, and Paul Motian never played with more refinement or grace than in this live performance, recorded ten days before LaFaro's death. The performance of "My Foolish Heart" included here is an ideal introduction to Evans's ballad style.

**1963:** *Conversations With Myself* (Verve 314 521 409-2), a Grammy-winning "solo" album in which Evans overdubs a second and third piano part. The performance of "Love Theme from *Spartacus*" is thought by many (myself included) to be Evans's greatest recorded performance.

**1968:** *At the Montreux Jazz Festival* (Verve 827 844-2). This is Evans's most successful recorded collaboration with Eddie Gomez, the bassist who played with him longer than any other musician. Of special interest is an exquisite unaccompanied solo version of George Gershwin's "I Loves You, Porgy."

**1971:** *The Bill Evans Album* (Columbia CK 64963). Accompanied by Gomez and drummer Marty Morell, his regular rhythm section from 1968 to 1974, Evans plays a program of his original compositions, alternating between acoustic piano and the electric Fender Rhodes instrument he played occasionally in later years.

**1975:** *The Tony Bennett/Bill Evans Album* (Fantasy OJCCD-439-2). One of Evans's rare recorded collaborations with a singer, this CD features a vocal version of "Waltz for Debby," his best-known composition (the lyric is by Gene Lees, who is currently at work on a biography of Evans), plus several ballads closely identified with the pianist, including "My Foolish Heart," "Some Other Time," "Young and Foolish," and "Days of Wine and Roses." Evans's accompaniments are masterful, and Bennett is in excellent voice throughout.

**1980:** *The Artist's Choice: Highlights from "Turn Out the Stars"* (Warner Brothers 9 46425-2). A boxed set titled *Turn Out the Stars* (Warner Brothers 9 45925-2, six CD's), released in 1996, was devoted to the live recordings Evans made with Marc Johnson and Joe LaBarbera at the Village Vanguard in the summer of 1980. *The Artist's Choice* is a single-CD compilation of material from these extraordinary performances, selected by Evans prior to his death.



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# Books in Review

## The Facts

America in Black and White: One Nation, Indivisible
by Stephan Thernstrom and Abigail Thernstrom
*Simon & Schuster. 704 pp. $32.50*

Reviewed by
James Q. Wilson

SUPPOSE YOU were on a trip to London, Jerusalem, or Nairobi, and were asked by a friend there to describe race relations back home in the United States. You are neither an academic specialist nor a government official; you are, rather, a typical white American with an ordinary range of knowledge and reasonable intelligence. What would you say?

You would, I think, say that blacks and whites in America still have problems getting along, but that these problems are much less severe than they once were. There are blacks where you work, where you shop, and where your children go to school. You know many middle-class blacks and often visit with them. Not only are blacks prominent in sports, they play a great variety of roles—mostly, in your opinion, rather attractive ones—in television and the movies. There are many elected black politicians. No one can survive publicly by telling jokes that degrade blacks, or win any significant elective office by catering to anti-black feelings.

But, you would continue, large problems do remain. Some whites remain racist in both attitude and action. They have to operate quietly, but they can—and do—try to undermine legitimate black claims to opportunity. There is a large black underclass that is still mired in drugs, gang life, and lawlessness. Blacks are overrepresented among people who commit violent crimes and go to prison. There has been a sharp rise in the proportion of black children raised by their unmarried mothers. Unemployment, especially among inner-city young people, remains high. Too many blacks (for that matter, too many whites) have developed a long-term dependency on government welfare.

Your foreign friend then asks what can be done about these problems. You reply that you do not really know, but since there has been so much progress in the last several decades, you are cautiously optimistic that more will be coming in the decades ahead. You have some pet ideas as to what might be tried, but you do not have a general plan based on much more than intuition.

Your friend might then say: in that case, the story is really pretty bad, isn't it? To which you would respond, no, the main story is a good one. American practices toward people of different races, especially blacks, have undergone a huge transformation. America today is not at all like America a half-century ago. In fact, blacks and whites get along much better than Israelis and Arabs, Germans and Turks, Chinese and Tibetans, Iraqis and Kurds, Indians and Pakistanis, Protestant Irish and Catholic Irish, or Kikuyus and Kalenjins.

SO MUCH for your trip abroad. On your return to America, you read

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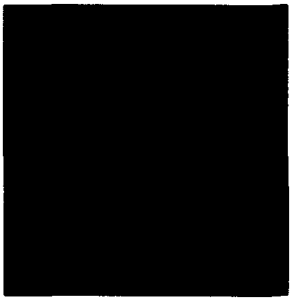
the new book by Stephan and Abigail Thernstrom, *America in Black and White*. Scarcely anything in it surprises you. It tells, in great detail and with the aid of many tables and footnotes, essentially the same story you have told your foreign friend.

There has indeed been a vast change in American race relations, especially in economics and politics. In 1940, the Thernstroms remind us, there was hardly anything like a black middle class; now, nearly half of all blacks consider themselves middle-class, and have the incomes to prove it. In 1940, a married black family earned only a small fraction of what a comparable white family earned; today, the former earns 87 percent of what the latter earns. In 1940, very few blacks lived in the suburbs; today, nearly a third live there, and over 40 percent own their own homes. In 1940, there were few elected black officials, and then only in mostly black districts; today there are over 8,000 such officials, many in places where blacks are a small minority. In 1963, fewer than 1 percent of all marriages were between whites and blacks; by 1993, that number was over 12 percent.

The Thernstroms hardly slight the remaining problems. Poverty, crime, unsatisfactory school achievement, the gap in performance on standardized tests, and the rise of single-parent families are all described in considerable detail. The conclusion they reach from their mixed story is that although there is much to be sorry about in American race relations, there is much to be proud of as well.

Then you read the reviews of the Thernstroms' book, and you wonder what planet you are living on. Nicholas Lemann, writing in the *New York Times Book Review*, begins his critique by pointing out in a damning tone that the Thernstroms got money for their project from conservative foundations. He goes on to "explain" that Stephan Thernstrom, who is a professor of history at Harvard, was once the object of "black student protests" because of something he said in his classroom. Finally, Lemann complains that unlike Gunnar Myrdal, the author of *An American Dilemma* (1946), the Thernstroms fail to offer any "sweeping, inspiring new vision of how to solve the problem of race in America." (Myrdal offered no such plan, either, other than to call upon Americans to live up to their American creed.)

Christopher Edley, a professor of law at Harvard, also finds nothing to like in the Thernstroms' book. It is, he charges in *Harvard Magazine*, a "convenient compendium of attacks on post-Martin Luther King, Jr. civil-rights orthodoxy," and one of its authors, Abigail Thernstrom, is a

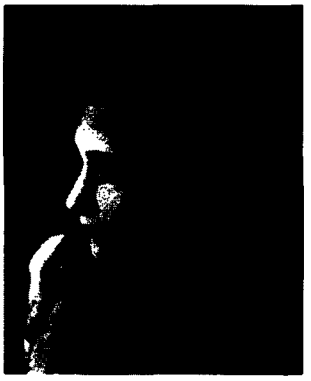



**Yale Companion to Jewish Writing and Thought in German Culture, 1096–1996**

Edited by Sander L. Gilman and Jack Zipes

This magisterial book—the first to provide a history of Jewish writing and thought in the German-speaking world—"proves that there never was a German-Jewish symbiosis. On the Jewish side, it was centuries of unrequited love. For most Germans, the Jews were and remained the other. This book is a **must read.**" —Arthur Hertzberg $49.95

A Selection of the Readers' Subscription



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**The Stolen Legacy of Anne Frank**

*Meyer Levin, Lillian Hellman, and the Staging of the Diary*

Ralph Melnick

"**Fascinating** insights into how Hollywood and Broadway combine to shape the cultural values they wish us to live by." —Lawrence L. Langer, *Forward*

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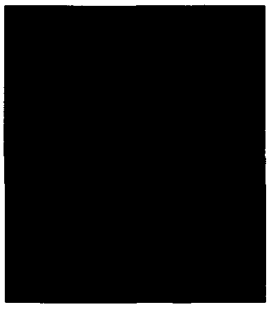

Portrait of Spinoza. Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel: Gemäldesammlung B 117.

**Spinoza, Liberalism, and the Question of Jewish Identity**

Steven B. Smith

**Winner of the 1997 Ralph Waldo Emerson Award**

"Steven Smith's **lucid and compelling** argument for writing Spinoza into the political theory canon is also a profound meditation on the Spinozan theme of religion and republican liberty." —Michael Walzer $30.00

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"conservative policy provocateur." (She is in fact the author of the award-winning study, *Whose Votes Count?*, and among other things a member of the Massachusetts State Board of Education.) Edley is especially upset at the authors' discussion of civil-rights case law and their analyses of schooling, voting rights, and "countless other topics." But he never says what is wrong with any of these analyses, or even hints at it. To him, this is simply a bad book, and since life is short he will spend no time detailing its alleged weaknesses.

A reviewer in the *San Francisco Chronicle* complains that the Thernstroms' view of past racial progress takes no account of our current "backsliding," evident in the decision of the University of California Board of Regents to "shut the door to all but a relatively few black applicants to some of the state's medical and law schools." The reviewer must be referring to the 1996 decision to require that all applicants to the university meet the same intellectual tests, instead of allowing some to claim access on the basis of ethnicity or skin color. This—ensuring equal treatment—is an odd way to "shut the door."

To be sure, the book has also received quite favorable reviews: from Thomas Sowell, Kenneth S. Lynn, Jim Sleeper, Linda Chavez, and David Frum. In addition, balanced reviews have been written by Alan Wolfe in the *New Republic* and by Glenn Loury in the *Atlantic*. Wolfe praises most of the book but finds some things to criticize; Loury admires the authors personally and agrees with much of their evidence, but describes their views as "too narrow, too inflexible, and too ideological" because they are fixated on "refuting liberals." On the whole, however, the reviews line up in a predictable pattern. The favorable ones are by conservatives and (with the exception of the *Wall Street Journal*) have appeared in publications of relatively limited circulation; the negative reviews are by liberals, and have appeared in the mainstream press.

Now WE are at the heart of the problem. An author of a book on race relations today, no matter how many statistical tables he includes, no matter how lengthy or exhaustive his footnotes, no matter how balanced his account, cannot escape one simple reality: racial discourse in this country has become politicized, and for many people, particularly for those who supply our public commentary, there is only one correct position. To such people, the Thernstroms' subtitle, "One Nation, Indivisible"—a phrase from our nation's Pledge of Allegiance—has become an empty hope. There cannot be one nation; we are at odds; race divides us, and always will, deeply and permanently.

In 1960, virtually all American intellectuals supported the end of segregation and looked forward to an age of racial comity. At last, they said, people would be judged as they should be judged: no longer according to their color, but as individuals. Today, one has to look hard to find a book by an American intellectual, black or white, endorsing the principle of individualism. Randall Kennedy has written one in *Race, Crime, and the Law*; so, in part (but only in part), has Orlando Patterson in his new book, *The Ordeal of Integration*.* As far as most other writers are concerned, you are either for blacks as a group, or against them as a group. If you believe in affirmative action, you are for them; if you oppose it, you are against them. If you think the police are a bastion of racial injustice, you are for them; if you think the police are trying to do a reasonable job, you are against them.

Now, it is in the nature of intellectuals to question and to argue. I argue a lot myself. Argument intensifies differences, in order, ideally, to clarify them. But what is striking in the current situation is the discrepancy between the opinions on racial matters held by intellectuals and upper-status Americans, both black and white, and those held by ordinary Americans.

Consider the distribution of opinion among blacks. One of the few good polls along these lines was conducted during the Reagan administration. In it, two-thirds of the black public reported that African-Americans were making progress—but only about one-third of black leaders agreed. Forty percent of the black public reported experiencing racial discrimination—but fully three-fourths of black leaders said they had suffered from it. Only a quarter of the black public—but three-quarters of black leaders—supported preferential treatment for minorities seeking admission to college. And so forth.

A similar dichotomy exists among white Americans. As Paul M. Sniderman has shown, those with less schooling or lower incomes tend to judge people as individuals, applauding blacks who work hard, remaining skeptical of those who do not, and expressing strong reservations about the efficacy of government programs. By contrast, upper-status whites, like upper-status blacks, speak easily of endemic white racism and want categorical government programs to address it (if with growing doubts as to whether they will make a difference).

Among ordinary folks, indeed, there seem to be few unbridgeable differences of opinion. Though blacks tend to be more liberal in politics and whites to be more conservative, they share many social and cultural outlooks. (For example, a majority of both blacks and whites supports prayer in the public schools and favors the death penalty.) They may disagree about political parties; they may have had different experiences with the police. But beyond their dif-

* I reviewed the first of these books in COMMENTARY (September 1997), the second in the *New York Times Book Review* (November 16, 1997).



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ferent perceptions there are broad areas of convergence, and not only on racial matters. The people believe in one nation, indivisible, even when they disagree about particular policies; a large part of our chattering classes do not believe in it at all.

One great mystery here is why better-off blacks, in particular, should be more likely than ordinary blacks to harbor a sense of having been personally oppressed. Perhaps it is, as some have speculated, the effect of college education—colleges and universities being the great incubators of the "adversary culture" and of an oppositional attitude toward society. According to Jennifer Hochschild in *Facing Up to the American Dream*, for example, about two-thirds of college-educated blacks (as opposed to one-quarter of those with only a high-school education) believe that the government actually or probably makes drugs available in poor black neighborhoods in order to harm black people.

There may be something to the idea that education reinforces this feeling of personal oppression, though after several decades of teaching I am not convinced that college makes so lasting an imprint. In any case, another explanation is that better-off blacks expect to be treated like better-off whites, and when they are not, or think they are not, they are more vulnerable to feelings of resentment. Many middle-class blacks, for instance, have indignantly reported being stopped by the police as they are innocently driving a nice car or walking in a white neighborhood. The Thernstroms cite a well-known Boston Celtics basketball player who was detained in a fancy white suburb where he was considering buying a home. This is a real and continuing problem.

Whatever the reason may be, the fact remains that blacks in high-status positions are much more likely than those one meets at baseball games to feel beleaguered, to suspect the motives of whites with whom they deal, to strike an adversarial stance. And that is not how things were supposed to work out; in fact, it is the opposite of how they were supposed to work out. In 1960, my guess is, most people would have predicted that, being the first to benefit from progress, higher-status blacks would quickly reattach themselves to the American dream, while lower-status blacks, who had to contend with poor living conditions, hostile trade unions, and indifferent local authorities, would suffer the most and be the last to change. In fact, lower-status blacks, angry as they may be about neighborhood conditions and job availability, do not feel very oppressed, while upper-status ones feel more deeply aggrieved and alienated.

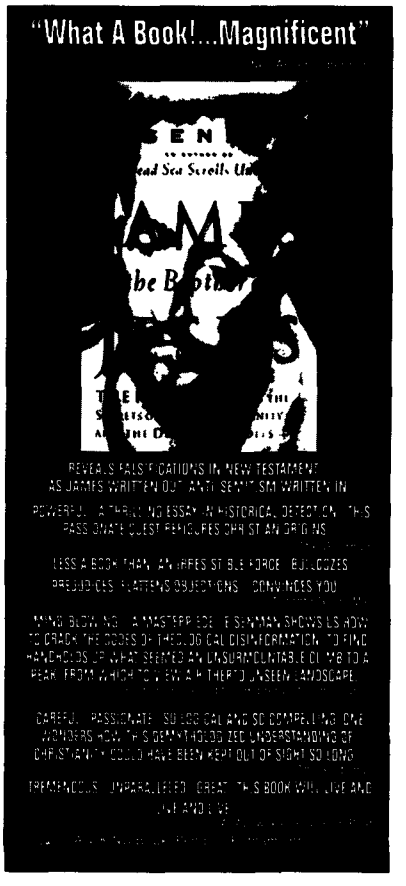
The polarization between elite and mass opinion, both black and white, follows several sharp fault lines. For at least one critic of the Thernstroms, namely Glenn Loury, the core problem is that too many Americans, including the Thernstroms themselves, are insufficiently attentive to the ways in which race has shaped, and still shapes, American society. Loury does not want to offer a "brief for color-conscious public policies," or indict American society "for being irredeemably racist." Nevertheless, he thinks (quoting a famous line by Justice Harry Blackmun in the 1978 *Bakke* case) that in order to "move beyond race, we must first take race into account." Unfortunately he does not indicate just how we are to move beyond race by first taking it into account, or how we can be more attentive to race in an intellectual atmosphere polarized by rival slogans about, precisely, the role of race.

For most critics other than Loury, the core fault line has to do with affirmative action. Here the central question is whether the government is doing "enough." By enough, elites mean results. And by results they mean measurable ones—getting more blacks into jobs, colleges, graduate schools, and government contracts.

The Thernstroms bring four challenges to the view that the problem is an insufficiency of government action.

First, economic progress among blacks began long before race-preferential policies were announced by President Lyndon Johnson in 1965 and put into effect later in the decade by Richard Nixon. The real change began in the 1940's and 1950's, spurred by the migration of blacks to northern cities, the demands of the war effort, and the steady weakening of overt racial prejudice.

Second, the gains of affirmative action have been largely restricted to upper-status blacks; the proportion of blacks with incomes below the poverty line has remained more or less constant since affirmative action began. The middle class may



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have been helped, but poverty was not reduced.

Third, as most of the scholarly work on affirmative action reveals, the gains themselves, even for the middle class, have been quite modest in scope. John J. Donahue III and James Heckman have been able to show almost no effect on black wages between 1963 and 1987 outside the South (which was excluded from their study). Farrell Bloch, in *Antidiscrimination Law and Minority Employment*, comes to an even more skeptical conclusion.

Fourth, it is far from clear that quotas, or "targets," or "goals" are essential to overcome some pervasive pattern of discrimination in employment. So-called audit studies—sending matched pairs of blacks and whites to look for jobs, and comparing the results—have produced contradictory findings. In these studies, white applicants in Washington, D.C., did indeed fare much better than blacks, but in Chicago blacks and whites were treated identically in 86 percent of the cases, while in Denver there was no statistically significant difference at all. Systematic evidence of employment discrimination is so sparse as to give little support, in the Thernstroms' judgment, to the idea that massive government intervention is needed.

Their critics disagree—and that, I think, is the reason for their sharp antagonism to this book. The antagonism is not based on a dispute over the evidence. The Thernstroms' arguments are drawn largely from published, nonpartisan studies. Their critics, for the most part, ignore these studies. In their view, what is wrong with the Thernstroms' book is not its factual basis—something to which they scarcely refer—but its "tone."

Perhaps here and there the Thernstroms, like all authors, express unwisely their exasperation with something they regard as outlandish. They certainly show little sympathy for the jury that acquitted O.J. Simpson, or for the Atlanta mayor who claimed that, without affirmative action, hardly any black would have a job, a business, or a contract. To their critics, this may suggest that the Thernstroms just do not understand what it means to be black. But the real imputation, I suspect, is that they do not understand what it means to be an upper-status black. For it is these blacks who on the one hand have been the chief beneficiaries of government programs, and who on the other hand feel most keenly slighted by the misperception on the part of white society that they are connected to a criminal underclass.

The Thernstroms' book is a bottle-with-a-message thrown into the churning waters of contrary opinions. Tossed about in the turbulence, knocked from shore to shore, it has been treated (with exceptions) more as a symbol than as a work of scholarship. That is most unfortunate. Tone is not the issue; facts are. This is a work of excellent scholarship, and one that supports, with facts, what most people really believe.

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## Heavy Weapon

Radio Free Europe and the Pursuit of Democracy: My War Within the Cold War

by George R. Urban

*Yale. 256 pp. $35.00*

Reviewed by
Gabriel Schoenfeld

ON A chilly December day in the last decade of the cold war, Emil Georgescu, a defector from Communist Romania and an employee of Radio Free Europe (RFE) in Munich, received a letter in his morning mail.

"Oh, Deformed One," the epistle began,

> We have heard that you have begun to bark at us, you mangy Judas. While you were on the other side of the Iron Curtain, you devoured all you could.... Here you are howling against us; you have sold out to the Masons and the Jewish Mafia at RFE....
>
> If you don't shut your Jewish trap, we'll see to it that you will be gripping clay underground along with other contaminated monsters.
>
> Be careful, viper, we'll be cutting off your venomous tongue.

The threats contained in this missive from Romania's secret police, the Securitate, were not idle. In July 1981, an attacker fell upon Georgescu on the staircase of his home, stabbing him 22 times. Georgescu (who as it happens was not Jewish) survived, only to succumb four years later to his injuries.

The Bulgarians, for their part, employed other lethal means—most notoriously, poison parasols. One victim was Georgi Markov, a Bulgarian defector and the author of scathing articles about political machinations in his homeland, where his broadcasts were heard regularly on RFE. In October 1978, as Markov was walking over Waterloo bridge in London, a stranger jostled him, poking him "accidentally" with an umbrella. He perished within days. When his body was exhumed weeks later for an autopsy, a pellet the size of a pinhead was found in his right thigh.

The USSR encouraged and assisted in the execution of such attacks, supplying, for example, the toxin—ricin—used against Markov and others. At the same time, it employed more pacific if not more subtle means. While infiltrating moles into the headquarters of Radio Free

GABRIEL SCHOENFELD, *senior editor of* COMMENTARY, *was formerly the editor of* Post-Soviet Prospects, *published by the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C.*



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Europe and Radio Liberty (RL)* to report back on internal deliberations and to stir dissension within the ranks, the Kremlin also spent millions jamming the airwaves in an effort to keep the proletariat from knowing up from down.

ALL THIS is powerful evidence of the extent to which the Soviet Union felt its grip jeopardized by Western broadcasting. But as we learn from this posthumously published memoir/analysis by the Hungarian-born intellectual George Urban, ill winds from the East were not the only foul weather the two radios were compelled to sail against. To Urban, who held a variety of posts at this key cold-war institution for over three decades, including a stint as RFE's director from 1983 to 1986, the peril to the radios from their Communist adversaries was in some ways less formidable than that issuing from the country paying the bills and setting policy: namely, the United States.

The primary difficulty was not what many might suspect—the fact that the reputation of the radios was undermined by close association in their early years with the CIA. To be sure, when knowledge of the spy agency's financial sponsorship became public in 1967, it did somewhat weaken support for them at home and diminish receptiveness abroad for their claim to be "surrogate stations," broadcasting only the kind of information and opinions that free media would have provided if the Soviet clamp had not been fixed in place. By the same token, however, in some quarters the CIA connection bolstered the authority with which the radios spoke, for, as Urban observes, "many in the Soviet domains liked to feel that the 'private' voices heard on the Western airwaves were expressing more than the nostalgia of exiles or undisclosed factional interests."

The more significant and persistent source of difficulties, in Urban's view, was the willful inability of those running and funding the radios (both before and after they had been disconnected from the CIA and turned over to a quasi-private, congressionally-funded board) to understand what Communism was about and how best to combat it in a war of words.

This inability arose from disparate sources at different times. One such source was the "vacuous pragmatism" and unrefined anti-Communism of many American leaders. In his capacity as a middle-ranking executive at RFE in the early 1960's, Urban wanted programming that would target the vacillating morale of Soviet and East European Communist elites. Through an on-air discussion of Marxist texts, he aimed to hit them "where it hurt"—in the zone "of moral conflict that we knew existed between their erstwhile idealism and their slavish yes-manship."

But to General Rodney C. Smith, the retired American military officer then running the two stations with exemplary efficiency, this kind of approach was unacceptable:

> He felt the use of unfamiliar [verbal] compounds and longish quotations from Communist literature was a flaw in our anti-Soviet credentials. Couldn't the unsuspecting listener take us for a Communist station through the jamming? Couldn't we, he asked, design broadcasts without quoting so many Communists?

But if such unvarnished anti-Communism could be troublesome, far more so was the well-polished anti-anti-Communism that increasingly came to the fore as the 60's wore into the 1970's. With distressing neatness, this soft-line orientation meshed with the hard-boiled strategic underpinnings of the Nixon's administration's attempt to forge a détente with the USSR. Where RFE and RL were concerned, the fusion of the two currents took the form of policy directives that kept distinguished opponents of Communism, including giants like Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, off the air.

By the 1980's, the restrictions hamstringing the radios had descended from the merely droll to the manifestly absurd. As Urban complained at the time in a private letter he reprints here, "Many of the ideas President [Ronald] Reagan and Secretary [of State George] Shultz regularly incorporate in their articulations cannot be uttered as our own"—i.e., broadcast—"because they, too, would violate our *Guidelines*."

AS LUDICROUS as all this may sound, the roots of the restrictions were not, it must be noted, exclusively ideological. A real question

* The former broadcast to Eastern Europe, the latter to the Soviet Union.

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existed regarding the limits of what a government-funded institution should and should not say over the airwaves to the populace of a hostile power. This question was particularly acute for RFE because, as Urban explains at some length, a debacle in its early days had left a deep organizational scar. That debacle involved RFE's possible complicity in the catastrophe that befell Hungary in 1956, when an abortive uprising was brutally crushed by Soviet tanks.

Though Urban was affiliated at the time with the BBC, not RFE, he offers his own inquest into that particularly searing chapter of the past. According to the standard indictment, RFE was guilty of having incited the Hungarian revolt and encouraged it once it was under way; most damning of all, the radio was accused of having held out an unfulfillable promise of armed assistance from the United States, in this way helping to lead thousands of Hungarian patriots to futile deaths.

Plowing ground he has tilled in a previous book but making use of material from newly opened archives, Urban here rejects some, but only some, of the old charges. RFE, he shows, had nothing to do with igniting the revolt and never directly pledged Western military help; nevertheless, it made mistakes, mistakes with consequences measurable in blood. In particular, it ignored the way the advice it provided to the insurgents might, in the confusion of events and through the Soviet jamming, be misinterpreted by desperate men and women eager to believe American help was on the way. Urban's final judgment, harsh but convincing, is that in the midst of a great crisis, RFE's management lost control and permitted some "highly irresponsible" broadcasts.

THIS BLOT on the radios' history must, of course, be evaluated against the entire record of their works. Urban himself appraises that record highly. In support of his case, he notes, among other things, that the two European Communist countries to which RFE *never* broadcast during the cold war—Yugoslavia and Albania—were the only ones to descend into fratricidal violence when the old superstructure collapsed.

Whether or not Western radio broadcasts would have had a mellowing effect on the Balkans must remain an open question. What can be stated with certainty, however, is that RFE and RL did contribute mightily to the peaceful undoing of Communism in Eastern Europe and the USSR. As we know from countless testimonials, the stations, despite the jamming, were listened to by peasants and politburo members alike, and the truths they conveyed had a highly corrosive effect on a system built on lies, compulsory ignorance, and barbed wire.

If *Radio Free Europe and the Pursuit of Democracy* is not a complete or definitive history, it will prove indispensable for historians to come. George Urban, who died this past October at the age of seventy-six, deserves accolades for writing so engaging a book. But Urban deserves to be remembered for other achievements as well, most notably the series of deep conversations he held with leading thinkers East and West that appeared over the years in the now-defunct British magazine *Encounter*.† The "war within the cold war" in which Urban actively participated, a war in which words served as heavy weapons, contributed appreciably to the victorious outcome of our epic battle with a mighty and seemingly immutable tyranny.

* *The Nineteen Days* (1957).

† They have been gathered together in a number of volumes edited by Urban, including *Détente* (1976); *Communist Reformation* (1979); *Stalinism: Its Impact on Russia and the World* (1982); *Can the Soviet System Survive Reform?* (1989); and *End of Empire: The Demise of the Soviet Union* (1992).

## Exalting the Ordinary

**Wallace Stevens: Collected Poetry and Prose**
edited by Frank Kermode and Joan Richardson
*Library of America. 1032 pp. $35.00*

Reviewed by
Algis Valiunas

WALLACE STEVENS (1879-1955) was a poet down to his fingertips. But his daily existence was of the purest prose: he settled in Hartford, Connecticut, and he worked as a lawyer in the insurance business. Few poets have dared to live a life so unabashedly humdrum. The solidest of citizens, Stevens was a firm believer in capitalism; a faithful, if not a happy, husband; a physically substantial man, on the meaty side; a good burgher who dutifully brought home the bacon and contentedly ate his share of it.

As a businessman, Stevens was a success, heading the department of fidelity and surety claims at the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company for nearly 40 years and working almost up until his death. The demands of job and family took their toll. After the publication of his first book of poems in 1923, and the birth of his daughter a year later, he wrote hardly at all for ten years. When Marianne Moore asked him to contribute to the august literary magazine the *Dial* in 1927, he replied, "The extreme irregularity of my life makes poetry out of the question, for the present, except for momentary violences."

It was more likely the extreme regularity of his life that left no room for poetry. But poetry elbowed its way back in. He would compose rough drafts on his way to the office, and refine them when he returned home in the evening. And

ALGIS VALIUNAS, *whose review of Nathanael West's collected works appeared in our November 1997 issue, writes on cultural and literary matters.*



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# GENOCIDE: A CRITICAL BIBLIOGRAPHIC REVIEW

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once he got going again, no surety claims could stop the flow. Mostly, he wrote of matters very far removed from an insurance office.

DECKED WITH literary accolades during his lifetime, Stevens now has a place of deserved honor in the Library of America. This volume includes about 600 pages of poems; three one-act plays; essays on literature, philosophy, painting, cattle ranching, and the insurance game; and selections from his notebooks, journals, and letters. Admirably edited by Frank Kermode, professor of English at Cambridge, and Joan Richardson, Stevens's biographer and professor of English at the City University of New York, this is an indispensable book for the reader of modern American verse.

Stevens wrote hundreds of brief lyrics and about a dozen longer poems. The main weight of his reputation rests on a handful of the shorter poems ("The Emperor of Ice-Cream," "Anecdote of the Jar," "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," "The Idea of Order at Key West," "The American Sublime," "Evening Without Angels," and "Of Mere Being") and two or three of the longer ones ("Sunday Morning," "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," and perhaps "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven"). His style ranges from the colloquial and terse to the rarefied and elaborate; sometimes he commingles the two.

Stevens did for American poetic language what Saul Bellow was to do for prose, extending its boundaries, taking in the magniloquent, the arcane, the plainspoken, the gaudy, the low-rent. He made up words that ring with a zany gaiety: *gurrituck, ric-a-nic, skreak and skritter, whirroos, boo-ha*. He employed words, common enough in themselves, that by studied repetition came to constitute a quasi-technical lexicon: reality, truth, intelligence, imagination, meaning, mind, knowledge. He is known for being lavishly brainy, even aridly intellectual, and with dismaying frequency his sinuous grace can indeed become a gnarled sententiousness. Yet Stevens is also capable of a remarkable sensuous precision and a ravishing melodic line, as in "Owl's Clover": "See how/On a day still full of summer, when the leaves/Appear to sleep within a sleeping air,/They suddenly fall and the leafless sound of the wind/Is no longer a sound of summer."

AMONG THE themes that preoccupied Stevens for a lifetime are these: that the attempt to know the world by mind alone is futile; that the pure joy of being makes "knowing" paltry by comparison; that the poet must cure the madness of unrestrained logic with the restorative of imagination; that modernity consigns most men to a spiritually flattened existence, from which anyone who truly wants to live must break free; that happiness is to be had on strictly human terms, in ordinary life exalted; that Christianity is defunct; and that we must admit the only life we will ever have is this earthly one.

Stevens, in short, has a project to advance; his poems are not so much meditations on thinking, feeling, and being as they are exhortations to think, feel, and be in the ways that he prescribes. His aim is to free us from "philosophic truth" on the one hand and from Christianity (which used to be the official view of truth until modern philosophy got its teeth into it) on the other. Having achieved this liberation from the two most influential varieties of the unreal, we can then get at reality by way of poetry.

In *The Necessary Angel: Essays on Reality and the Imagination* (1951), Stevens spells out the project in some detail. The poet's undertaking is to do what the philosopher, who holds reason paramount, cannot: to "accomplish a poetry that satisfies both the reason and the imagination." Poetry, moreover, unlike philosophy, is on the side of life: "if the end of the philosopher is despair, the end of the poet is fulfillment, since the poet finds a sanction for life in poetry that satisfies the imagination." As for religion, "in an age in which disbelief is so profoundly prevalent . . . poetry and painting, and the arts in general, are, in their measure, a compensation for what has been lost." Of course, some losses are made good more easily than others; in Stevens's view, this particular loss was not a great one.

However we judge Stevens's project, there is a very great deal to admire in his poetry. He is like the village atheist who happens to be a gorgeous woman; she may not convince you, but she makes you wish she could. Such testaments of unbelief as "Sunday Morning," "How To Live. What To Do," and "Evening Without Angels" are undeniably seductive. For sheer rhetorical sumptuousness, the best of the emancipated Stevens, as in "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," rivals the best of the believing T.S. Eliot in *Four Quartets*:

> What am I to believe? If the
> angel in his cloud,
> Serenely gazing at the violent
> abyss,
> Plucks on his strings to pluck
> abysmal glory,
>
> Leaps downward through
> evening's revelations, and
> On his spredden wings, needs
> nothing but deep space,
> Forgets the gold centre, the
> golden destiny,
>
> Grows warm in the motionless
> motion of his flight,
> Am I that imagine this angel
> less-satisfied?
> Are the wings his, the lapis-
> haunted air?
>
> Is it he or I that experience
> this?
> Is it I then that keep saying
> there is an hour
> Filled with expressible bliss, in
> which I have



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No need, am happy, forget
need's golden hand,
Am satisfied without solacing
majesty,
And if there is an hour there is
a day,

There is a month, a year, there
is a time
In which majesty is a mirror of
the self:
I have not but I am and as I am,
I am.

It is possible that some men are born to be surety-claims wizards; Stevens became one incidentally. Poetry is what he was made for, and he made the grandest claims for it. Neither the life of philosophy nor the life of faith was for him. Poetry was what he had, and, even if one might prefer he did something else with it, he does what he does about as well as it can be done.

T.S. Eliot, whom Stevens found a bore, observed that to believe poetry will save you when religion is gone is like believing the wallpaper will save you when the walls have fallen down. Wallace Stevens, who stands with Eliot and Robert Frost in the front rank of 20th-century American poets, hung paper with the best of them.

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## Where Truth Is Falsity

### Conspiracy: How the Paranoid Style Flourishes and Where It Comes From

by Daniel Pipes

*Free Press. 258 pp. $25.00*

Reviewed by
Mark Falcoff

Shortly before sitting down to read this book, I had a lunch-table conversation with the sister of a friend of mine in Buenos Aires. She was explaining to me the real sources of the assassination of John F. Kennedy, complete with multiple bullets, CIA plots, and Cuban exiles. When I expressed some doubt as to the likelihood of her theories, she said—as if to deliver the final, devastating *coup de grâce*—"Well, you obviously haven't seen Oliver Stone's movie, *JFK*."

Welcome to the world of conspiracy theorists, where knowledge is ignorance, truth is falsity, and anything can happen—and usually does. To judge by Daniel Pipes's latest book, there are, and always have been, quite a few people dwelling in the same intellectual penumbra as my friend's sister. *Conspiracy* is a broad conspectus, a kind of *vade mecum*, of theories that are truly global in their extent and surprisingly homogeneous in their content and methodology.

This work is a by-product of Pipes's primary interest in the Middle East, which recently led him to write *The Hidden Hand: Middle East Theories of Conspiracy*.* There he reported that in the Islamic Middle East (as indeed in other peripheral areas, including Latin America, Africa, and South Asia), conspiracism, which one tends to think of as the characteristic intellectual tool only of the ignorant and the pseudo-sophisticated, instead dominates mainstream political thinking. In this book he extends his range to other parts of the world, including the United States.

As Pipes points out, conspiracy theories originated in Western Europe in the century after the French Revolution and enjoyed a surprisingly robust existence both there and in the United States. The principal targets in Europe were Jews and Freemasons (or members of other secret societies like the Rosicrucians); in this country, conspiracy theories tended to focus on our then-small Catholic minority or on immigrants generally. Today, as if to underscore the centrality of Western culture to civilization in general, some of these same ideas have spread outward, forming the meat and drink of newspaper readers in societies as disparate as Iran and Japan, Russia and Argentina, Syria and India.

*Conspiracy* brings forward three points worth pondering. First, when it comes to the targets chosen by conspiracy theorists, there is a surprising lack of originality; they tend to be pretty much the same everywhere, though they may appear and reappear in different and even contradictory combinations. Secondly, anti-Semitism (or, more accurately, hatred of Jews) recurs as a central theme with disturbing regularity—yesterday and today, in the West and the non-West alike. Thirdly, in the world of the conspiracist there is no Left or Right—or, rather, Left and Right dissolve and work together in strange and unexpected ways (Pipes calls it "fusion paranoia"); a glance at Louis Farrakhan's newspaper, the *Final Call*, or any of the publications of Lyndon LaRouche demonstrates this quite clearly.

Among the persistent targets of conspiracism, Pipes identifies both the United States and Great Britain. Naturally, the latter occupied a more central place in 19th-century theories, though even today we see, for example, the widespread belief in Egypt that Princess Diana was assassinated by British intelligence (to prevent her from marrying her Muslim beau, Dodi Al Faid). The United States, as the only remaining superpower and the principal exporter of popular culture, is inevitably assigned the greater weight today.

But if hatred and suspicion of powerful entities like Britain or the United States may have some basis, however warped, in reality, hatred of the Jews—and of Israel—is less easy to explain. For over two millennia Jews have been objects of, as

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* Reviewed in Commentary by Joseph Shattan, February 1997.



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Pipes puts it, "intellectual disdain by sophisticated atheists . . .; resentment among fervent Christians and Muslims; jealousy among peasants; social snobbery among aristocrats; political anger among defeated Arab leaders"—not to mention repudiation by apostates or individuals out to deny their own Jewish origins. To all this, the idea of a Jewish conspiracy lends a spurious aura of "rational" justification.

Remarkably, the notion of a Jewish conspiracy continues to flourish in countries that no longer have Jewish communities, or where no significant number of Jews have ever lived. The permanent disability under which Poles labor in this regard is well known, but a similar phenomenon exists in Japan and Malaysia. The latter country is described by Pipes as "a minor hotbed of conspiratorial anti-Semitism"; its prime minister, Mahathir Mohamad, has even blamed criticism of him in the *Chinese*-language press on Jewish control of the media.

My own favorite example of this phenomenon, not included in Pipes's book, concerns Jaime Roldós, the President of Ecuador, who in the 1980's was killed with his wife in a plane crash widely attributed to a Zionist plot. The "proof" was that Roldós's wife came from one of the country's leading Syrian-Lebanese political families, and more conclusive still—as I heard from an Ecuadoran journalist—was that Roldós was "well-known" to be opposed to Israeli settlements on the West Bank. *QED.*

ALTHOUGH CONSPIRACISM flourishes at both extremes of the political spectrum, in the United States it has often been identified almost exclusively with the far Right. This, for example, was the argument of the late Richard Hofstadter in *The Paranoid Style in American Politics* (1967), which centered on the Barry Goldwater phenomenon. But conspiracism has many left-wing practitioners as well. Without even reaching for the index to Pipes's book, I can name Richard Falk, Noam Chomsky, Ramsey Clark, Michael Lind, Gary Sick (author of the fictitious "October Surprise"), Pierre Salinger, and Seymour Hersh, the author, most recently, of *The Dark Side of Camelot.*

That being so, why is it that we hear so little about left-wing conspiracy theorists and so much about Pat Robertson and his alleged obsession with "Bavarian Illuminati"? In addressing this question, Pipes reminds us, first of all, that while most right-wing conspiracists are identifiable cranks, nuts, or semi-literate political primitives, the left-wing variety tend to sport fancy academic credentials, to be more subtle, and to show a greater appreciation for the restraints of common sense. In addition, they operate in an environment, particularly in the media and the universities, where many people are sympathetic to their overall political views. This and only this can explain how Lee Harvey Oswald, an avowed Marxist and Castroite sympathizer, a virtual defector to the Soviet Union, could have been successfully morphed (as in the imaginings of my Argentine lunch companion) into an instrument of a right-wing plot against the (hardly left-wing) John F. Kennedy.

As Daniel Pipes observes in his sometimes diverting, sometimes shocking book, conspiracism is in many ways a form of pornography—in this case political rather than sexual. Like the latter, it has lately discovered the Internet: in his final appendix, Pipes lists sites on the World Wide Web where one can visit some of its wilder shores. What is depressing is that, just as in the case of sexual pornography, those wilder shores have begun to wash a good deal closer than many of us would like to imagine.

## $$$

### Money: Who Has How Much and Why
by Andrew Hacker
*Scribner. 288 pp. $25.00*

Reviewed by
David Frum

FOR NEARLY twenty years, social critics stretching from Left to Right have been warning that the United States is sliding toward a future in which the rich will lock themselves in gated communities while the ever-more numerous poor have to compete for a living with workers in China earning 30 cents a day. Economic statistics have lent some credence to these dire predictions. While the number of affluent households in America has more than doubled since the late 1970's, average individual income has been rising only slowly. In the meantime, the ranks of the super-rich have been bulging: thousands of decimillionaires, hundreds of centimillionaires, dozens of billionaires.

But is this the whole story? In *The House of Morgan* (1990), Ron Chernow's brilliant history of an American banking dynasty, there is a photograph of J. Pierrepont Morgan stepping out of his Madison Avenue brownstone early in the second decade of the 20th century. Wearing a silk-lapeled frock coat and a glossy top hat, Morgan is charging forward furiously, his walking stick raised over the head of a photographer who has snapped his picture without permission. Morgan is not just richer than other people; he is the Morgan of Morgan's Bank, the man who holds the destinies of kingdoms and empires in his hands. He is mightier, grander, more titanic than other mortals. To this day, when we think

DAVID FRUM *is a contributing editor of the* Weekly Standard *and the author of* Dead Right.



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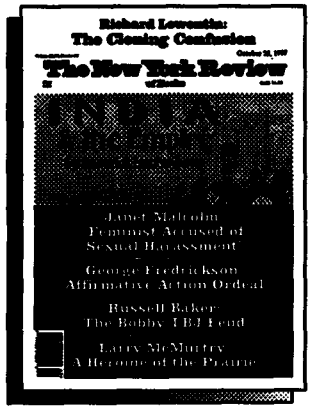


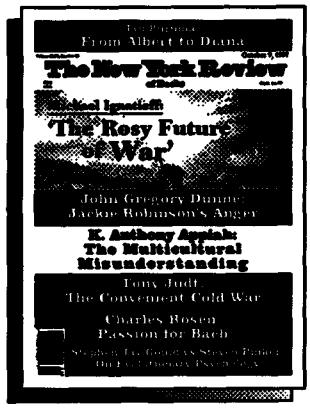


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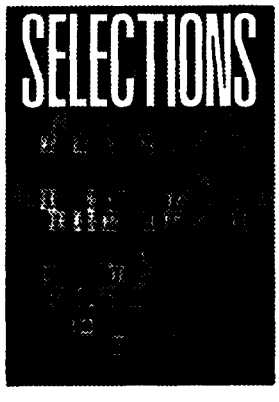


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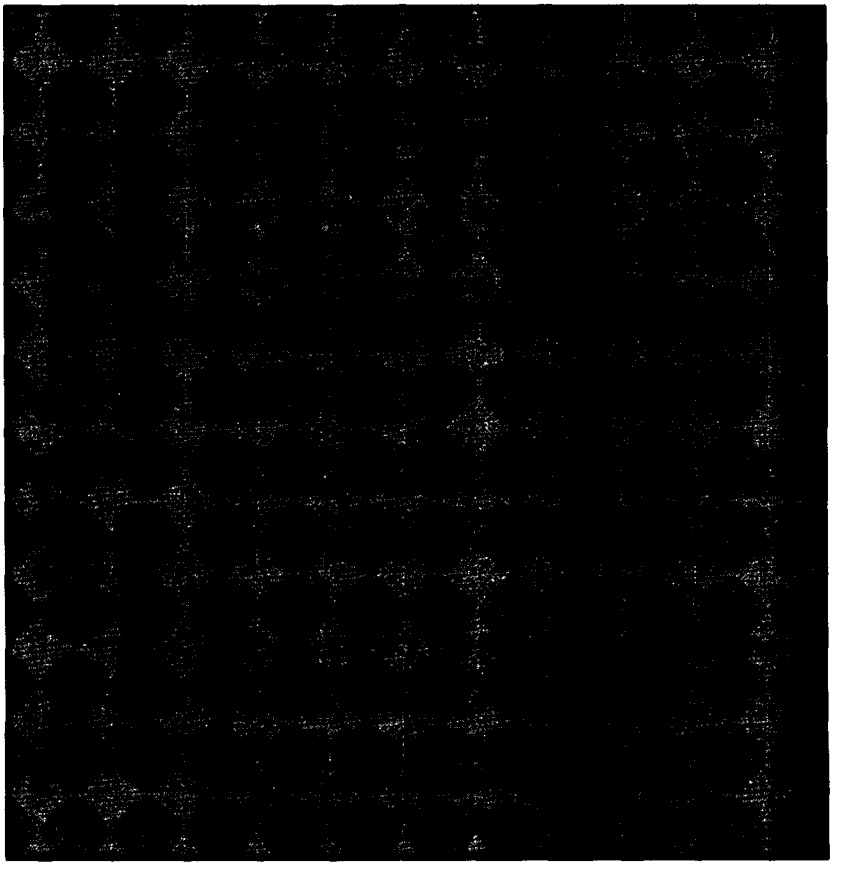
of the very rich, his name, and those of his friends and enemies of three-quarters of a century ago, still come to mind: the Carnegies, the Rockefellers, the Vanderbilts, the Fricks, the Goulds.

Somehow one doubts that their epigones today will leave so long a shadow. They, too, are richer than everyone else; but grander, they certainly are not. Who, indeed, could be less awe-inspiring than the American multimillionaire of the 1990's? There they were on the cover of *Newsweek* this past August: David Geffen in a T-shirt, Steven Spielberg in a baseball cap, Bill Gates in his rectangular nerd glasses.

The reappearance of great fortunes in the United States has coincided, as Christopher C. DeMuth pointed out in the October COMMENTARY ("The New Wealth of Nations"), with the emergence of a hyperaggressive egalitarianism in all the noneconomic corners of American life. Students call teachers by their first names, and there can be scarcely a boss who is still referred to by his secretary as "Mister." Companies have done away with executive washrooms, reserved parking spots, offices with doors—anything reminiscent of hierarchy or privilege.

Even more strangely, as wealthy people become more numerous, their cultural power seems to dwindle. When almost everybody was poor, Americans aped the mannerisms of the rich. Gangsters wore tuxedos; movie studios taught former Ziegfeld girls to speak in the broad tones of old Greenwich and Park Avenue. But some time in the late 1950's (by Tom Wolfe's reckoning), the American middle class stopped looking up for its cultural clues and started looking down. The children of the affluent now walk through the doors of their expensive private schools affecting the look of drug dealers, and advertising executives impress their clients by phrasing their pitch in the argot of the street.

What is going on here? Is the country engaged in some vast exercise in self-deception, insisting on the equality of everyone and everything whether they are equal or not? Or have Americans decided that so long as no student gets higher grades than the student next to him, or no Little League team wins more games than any other, then it does not matter that some people earn $1 million a year while others get by on $10,000? Have they decided, in other words, that economic inequality is the only inequality they will tolerate?



WHAT MAKES me think this latter explanation may be close to the truth is the evolution of the contemporary political Left away from its traditional economic preoccupations. It is striking, for example, how little effort the Clinton administration has put into economic redistribution and how much into attacking other forms of perceived inequality, especially racial and sexual. In fact, in an especially rich irony, this zeal for social and cultural egalitarianism may be exacerbating economic inequality, for it has degraded the quality of American education just when it has become urgent that American workers know how to read well, calculate accurately, and deal intelligently with customers and colleagues.

Of course, some on the Left *are* still agitated about economic inequality. House Minority leader Richard Gephardt will try, as Senator Tom Harkin tried before him, to make it a national issue when he runs for President in 2000. The themes and melodies of the old Democratic populist economics can still be heard in the speeches of Jesse Jackson (as they can be heard on the Right in those of Patrick J.



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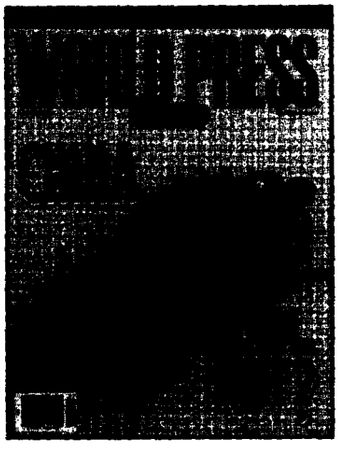

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Buchanan). And there still remain intellectuals, economists, and writers preoccupied with the issue.

Of these, one of the most cogent is the political scientist Andrew Hacker. In the argument over the state of the American economy, Hacker's latest book, *Money*, offers one of the best briefs for the prosecution.

Hacker is a diligent gatherer of statistics. Assembling his own tables from raw census materials and other data, he presents a fascinating tale of how things are getting worse for many people in contemporary America (informing us, for instance, that the proportion of Americans living in trailer homes more than doubled between 1970 and 1990). Unfortunately, he is much less keen to tell the equally fascinating story of how much better off many other Americans are than they used to be. As in his earlier book about race, *Two Nations* (1992), Hacker shows himself here a card-carrying member of that tradition of gloomsaying which positively *requires* seeing people on the edge of disaster everywhere. To hear him tell it in *Money*, doctors, lawyers, and professionals of all kinds can soon expect to suffer the same drop-off in earnings that has already struck longshoremen, steelworkers, and janitors.

Above all, Hacker wants to convince his readers that the American distribution of income is not merely lopsided but actively and irredeemably foolish. The very fact that Americans "probably spend more time commenting on absurdities and outrages [in our economic system] than remarking on how equitably it works" suggests, to Hacker, "how far we are from allocating incomes and earnings in ways that can be called even remotely rational." But though it is obvious to *him* that paying a starting teacher $23,000 and a young investment banker $93,000 is irrational, he offers no grounds—not only no convincing grounds, but no grounds at all—by which to assess the correctness of this view. A reader either shares it or not.

And here, perhaps, lies an answer to the mystery of why, if economic inequality has in fact been rising, the much-predicted revival of "progressive" politics has failed to appear on schedule. Nothing in this world is more natural than to resent people who earn more than we do. Most of us, however, have learned to regard this resentment as a vice. For it to be transformed into a political program, we would have to begin to see our resentment as, instead, a high-minded reaction to injustice.

That, indeed, was the emotional function of socialism: to systematize and ennoble ordinary resentment, and then to mobilize it in the name of a different system of social and economic rewards. With the collapse of socialism both as a system and as a coherent idea, it no longer signifies anything to attack the *overall* distribution of income as "irrational" (though particular inefficiencies and distortions are of course another issue). One may dislike this overall distribution as a matter of raw emotion, but in the absence of a credible alternative vision of a modern economy, like the one once supplied by socialism, the kind of argument Hacker is striving to make ceases to be intellectually sustainable. It is, quite literally, meaningless.

"I ONCE played a cruel trick on a wasp." So begins a great essay by George Orwell describing how, as a boy, he cut a wasp in half as it was dining on sugar, and how the wasp lived for a moment or two before realizing what had happened to it. That image—of a wasp unaware that its brain had been severed from its body—seemed to Orwell to describe the plight of post-religious man, carrying on his life as before, condemning some things as "immoral" and praising others as "right" without stopping to consider that he was meting out praise and blame by reference to a system of values in which he himself had ceased to believe.

Whether or not this is an accurate description of post-religious man, it strikes me as an astute portrait of post-socialist man. So long as it remains so, intellectuals of the Left like Andrew Hacker, for all their astonishing success in discrediting every other form of human difference, will be left to mutter and fulminate when the subject turns to money and class.



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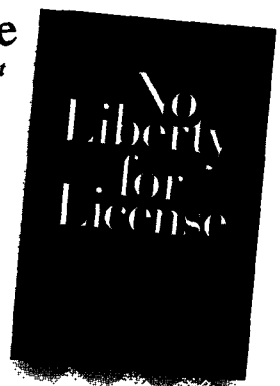
# Books for the Culture Wars

## No Liberty for License

*The Forgotten Logic of the First Amendment*
*by David Lowenthal*
*with a foreword by Harvey C. Mansfield*

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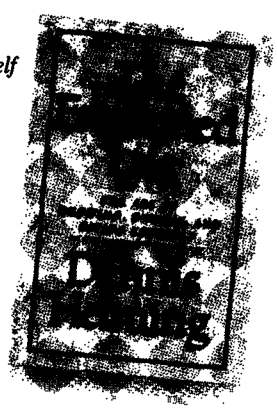

Why should I care about the moral life? *Because it makes me happy.* Unlike other books on morality, this one focuses on why we should bother to live virtuously. Each person's experience, if he knows how to examine it, teaches that the deep human hunger for happiness is satisfied only by a virtuous life. And with the right road map, a virtuous life *is* possible. *The Examined Life* is full of practical wisdom for the moral journey to happiness. Helming zeros in on the concrete struggles of everyday life where the virtues are really lived—struggles involving chastity, work, study, friendship, love, marriage, and parenthood. **$24.95 (Hardcover)**

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*"The Anatomy of a Controversy"*
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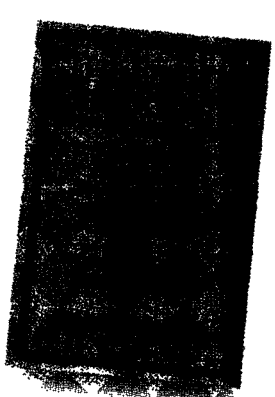

Collected here is the original symposium on "The End of Democracy? The Judicial Usurpation of Politics," in which Robert Bork, Russell Hittinger, Hadley Arkes, Charles Colson, Robert George, and the editors of *First Things* confront five decades of judicial decrees arrogating to the courts the final say on abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality, obscenity, and other fundamental questions of how we order our lives together. Responses from 20 eminent commentators follow, ranging from condemnation of the symposium's reckless flirtation with rebellion to praise for its forthright engagement of distressing but urgent questions. An extended review of the contours and implications of the controversy by Richard John Neuhaus rounds out the volume. *The End of Democracy?* places in the reader's hands everything he needs for a command of the salient constitutional debate of the decade. **$22.95 (Hardcover), $11.95 (Paperback)**

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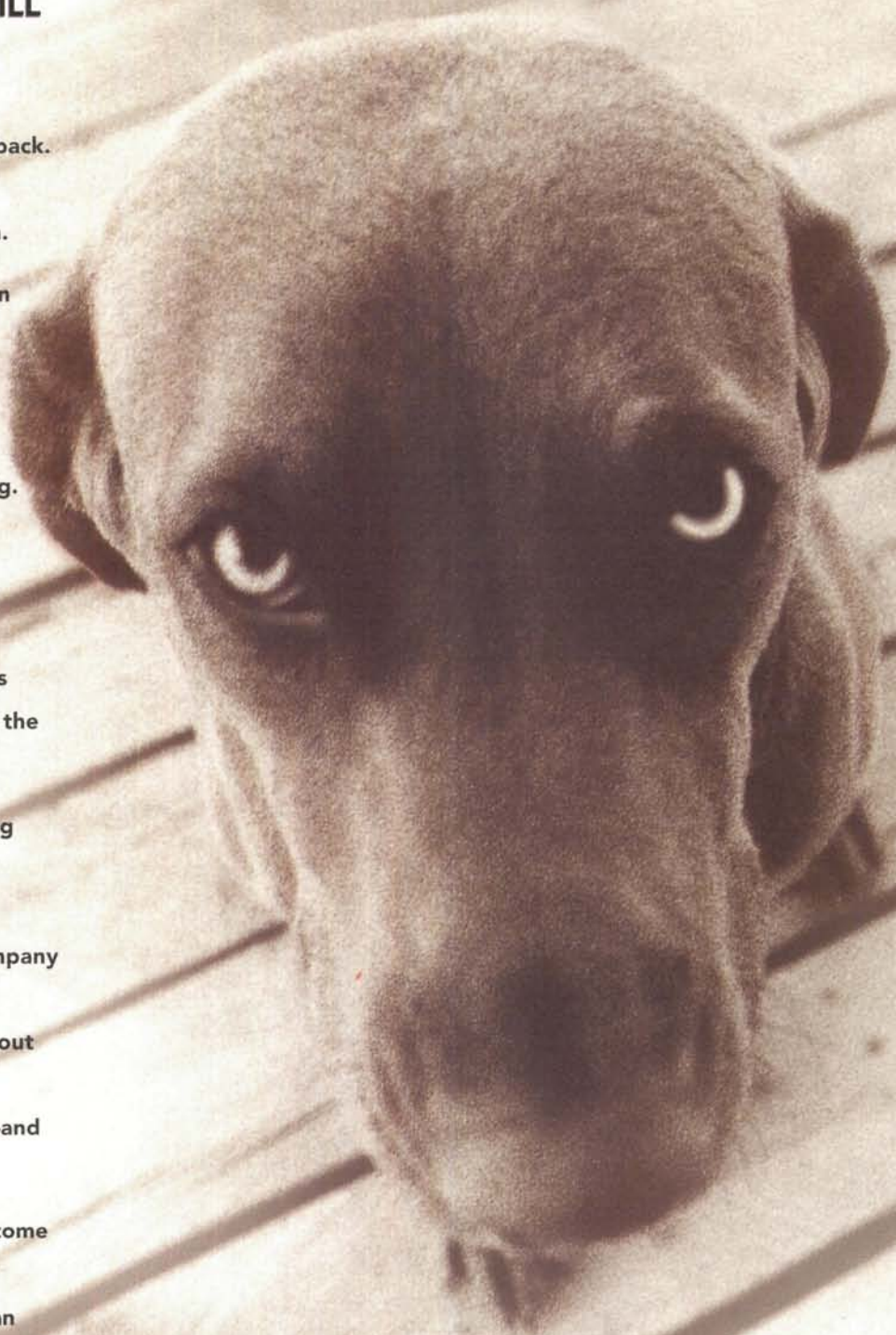

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